The Lousy State of the Union

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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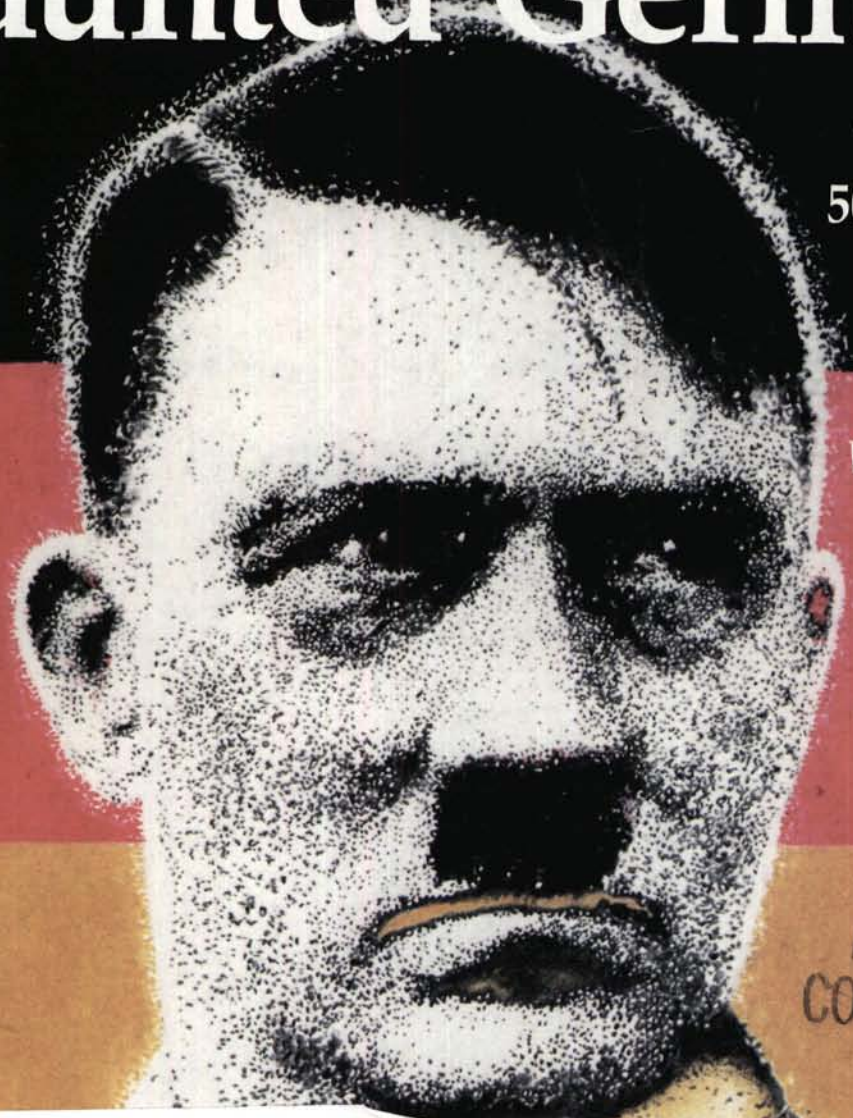

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CORRESPONDENCE

NUCLEAR MISSIVES

To the editors:
Leon Wieseltier's "Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace" (TNR, January 10 & 17, 1983) was extraordinarily penetrating, closely reasoned, and thought-provoking. No responsible student of the nuclear threat to peace, or of U.S.-Soviet relations, will be able to ignore it hereafter.

I was left in some doubt about his conclusions, however. He states: "Anybody who is sincerely concerned about the nuclear danger will agree that the world will be no safer if cuts are made in only one arsenal." On the other hand, because there is such redundancy in the nuclear arsenals, ". . . we have room in which to move. Let us, to show that we are serious about arms control, volunteer to take apart some of what we have, because the gesture may make a change in the hearts of Americans and in the hearts of Russians. . . ."

If I understand him correctly, he is calling for a limited amount of unilateral nuclear disarmament to create a climate conducive to further, substantial, mutually balanced disarmament steps. If so, I could not agree more.

REO M. CHRISTENSON
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

To the editors:
Leon Wieseltier's article was one of the most thoughtful essays that I have read on a difficult subject.

HENRY A. KISSINGER
New York, New York

To the editors:
Leon Wieseltier gives excellent reasons for his conclusion that deterrence coupled with gradual mutual disarmament is the policy option most favorable for national security. His remarks are a bit hard on those he calls antinuclear activists, some of whom have been promoting just this conclusion for three decades. During most of that time the official position of the United States has been that "we arm to parley," that is, that we will negotiate seriously on arms limitation after we have deployed the next nuclear weapons system. Wieseltier proposes more of the same. In his concluding paragraph, after listing our present strategic missiles, he says, "In this decade, furthermore, the United States will deploy air-launched cruise missiles and sea-launched cruise missiles, making its strategic triad into a strategic pentad. The requirements of deterrence, then, are well satisfied." The more reasonable view is that the requirements of deterrence are *now* well satisfied, without the cruise missiles or even the less innovative MX. That conclusion is the main motivation of the freeze movement. The degree of prospective nuclear overkill is so great that it makes no crucial difference for nuclear deterrence whether there is a close balance in numbers or whether our European intermediate-range missiles are in submarines or on land.

As was said of the H-bomb in 1952, the cruise missile takes us into a new and more dangerous era of the nuclear age. The Soviets will develop it in due course, following our initiative as usual. If we deploy it massively, they will, too, followed eventually by such countries as Argentina and perhaps even Cuba. If we do not, we can expect to obtain sufficient assurance that they will not. Just this once we should desist from deploying the next weapons system while negotiating, urgently and with flexibility, now.

DAVID RITTENHOUSE INGLIS
Amherst, Massachusetts

To the editors:
Hooray for Leon Wieseltier's "Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace"! At last someone has charted a spine-stiffening path between Reagan's blank check to the military and the dreams of the freezeniks. Let's hear more for the party of deterrence.

HADSEL-MARES
Burlington, Vermont

To the editors:
Mr. Wieseltier's remark, "No masses ever marched in the name of realism," is the perfect footnote to an article quite often devoid of realism.

"Sooner or later deterrence may fail; our luck cannot last forever. Measures must be taken, therefore, to cut our losses, and theirs. . . . The superpowers must agree on rules for the immediate renunciation of any further use of nuclear weapons after the war has begun." Who's kidding whom? Does Mr. Wieseltier really believe that Yuri Andropov, after making the decision to launch his ICBMs, will suddenly decide a few minutes later to call the whole thing off? If so, why would he push the button? Surely he would know the outcome of such action.

Mr. Wieseltier appears rather indisposed to American plans to fight a nuclear war. Well, I hope and, yes, pray that we have some plans. Further, I would be heartened if we could figure out how to win, and win before there was nothing left to save.

The direction this country should take is clear. Maintain deterrence, modernize our defenses, and, if possible, come to terms with the Soviet Union on some type of disarmament. But that is only the beginning. Never before have diplomatic agreements prevented war; we most certainly should not stake our future on them now. The technology at our disposal makes it highly possible to perfect a high-level ABM system that will permanently put the atomic genie back in the bottle. Not until then, when the U.S. is completely impervious to nuclear attack, can we rest easy.

GEORGES A. PRIDEAUX
Los Angeles, California

To the editors:
Thank you for your special issue containing "Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace." It is a helpful addition to the nuclear freeze debate. However, Mr. Wieseltier focuses on the Soviet Union as *the* threat to peace. His conclusions would be strengthened even more in the presence of other peace initiatives.

The present decline in our quality of life stems more from our economy than from the intent of the Russians. Perhaps our fear of the Soviets is an expression of an unspoken fear that our economy is forever changed for the worse.

We continue our voodoo economic policy. We seem to have a voodoo human rights policy. It probably follows that we must have a voodoo defense policy, too.

ROBERT G. PIPPITT
Lafayette, Indiana

To the editors:
Leon Wieseltier smears the freeze campaign by identifying it with isomorphism and unilateralism. My support for the freeze, most specifically for the Kennedy-Hatfield resolution, is predicated on a strong belief in deterrence; each side to-

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day can destroy the other in a second strike—therefore both arsenals can be frozen safely. Why does Mr. Wieseltier oppose the freeze? Because though Mr. Wieseltier is logical enough to believe in deterrence, he cannot avoid some unfortunate contradictions.

The author writes: "Our nuclear force at sea is impossible to detect, and impossible to defend against. (It is worth noting that responsible opponents of the arms race . . . support the improvement of the American marine deterrent, particularly of the Trident II missles—which a *freeze* would not allow.)" (Italics mine.) But if our sub nukes are as great as described (and they are), then why do we need a brand new system?

In the end Mr. Wieseltier expresses agreement with the freeze movement as profoundly as possible when he concludes: "The requirements of deterrence, then, are well satisfied." And so, deterrence. And so, the freeze.

EVAN R. KAISER
Medical Students
for Nuclear Disarmament
New York, New York

To the editors:

I have a problem with Leon Wieseltier. I think he worries too much.

As usual he is brilliant. But I feel that he is too much focused on the sound and fury of what we read in the media and too little in touch with the main currents of American thinking. Wieseltier concludes by saying, "The party of deterrence is too little esteemed by the public. This is not surprising; no masses ever marched in the name of realism." Well, maybe they don't need to.

I am willing to bet that the instincts of the American people on the issue of national military security will be shown to be as sound as they have been in the debate over Israel. That, in short, the majority of Americans solidly support the strategy of deterrence, that they are wise and realistic in a way that Helen Caldicott and Ronald Reagan are not. Hell, maybe Lincoln and Whitman were right after all. Not to worry, Leon.

GLENN DIAMOND
Fairfax, California

To the editors:

In his stunning piece on nuclear war and disarmament Leon Wieseltier seems so intent on casting a plague upon both anti- and pro-nuclear forces that he ignores very important areas of agreement between him and many responsible anti-nuclear elements. In particular, I cannot see why he does not support a nuclear freeze. In his one passing reference to the idea he seems to argue that we must go forward with the Trident submarine, which a freeze would not permit us to do; but this seems a very weak reed upon which to base opposition to the simplest and most effective means of moving toward the disarmament and *stable* deterrence that he favors. The Trident may actually lessen the effectiveness of our submarine-based deterrent simply because there will be so many fewer Tridents than Polarises and it has been designed as a highly accurate nuclear war-fighting weapon of the kind Wieseltier deplores —a fact that has only barely found its way into the American press.

On another front, I question whether the European opposition to "no first use" is mainly budgetary in nature. Traditionally the Europeans have opposed the idea of a conventional response to a conventional Soviet attack partly because they believe that even a conventional war would completely destroy Europe—a view that may be correct.

The real reason for peace in Europe, however—and one that Wieseltier ignores—is that neither the Soviet Union nor the United States has any reason to upset the present European settlement. Why should Moscow try to overthrow an arrangement that has been of such enormous benefit and that holds so few risks? Under the circumstances it should be possible to stabilize both the conventional and the nuclear balance in Europe at a much-reduced level—if we are willing to pursue difficult negotiations over a long period of years.

DAVID E. KAISER
Carnegie-Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

I find myself in general agreement with Leon Wieseltier's eloquent argument on behalf of deterrence. But I would suggest the following nuances.

In the first place, there is a contradiction between his argument at the strategic level, and his argument about Europe. It is true that the SS-20 is a new and formidable weapon, but the point he made about Soviet weapons and strategy in the earlier part of the article applies here too: the notion of nuclear superiority is a fiction. What the SS-20s can do, could be done by other Soviet weapons —especially Soviet ICBMs. And while it is true that there is an imbalance of intermediate nuclear forces, this imbalance is likely to have disastrous effects—such as allowing the Soviets to believe they could start a conventional war in Europe and keep it from escalating—*only* if the United States decides not to treat a (conventional) attack on Europe as an attack on the United States. As long as Western Europe is stuffed with (admittedly shorter range) nuclear weapons, *and* several American strategic systems have been assigned to NATO, are the Soviets likely to make such a gamble? And what if the United States decides, out of prudence, not to initiate the use of nuclear weapons in Europe? There is no way for the Europeans to be certain that the presence of the new weapons to be deployed would have the desired "coupling" effect, since these weapons—the Pershing II and the cruise missiles—will remain under American control. If Europe is not an integral part of American security, they are useless; if it is, they are not indispensable. To be sure, their purpose, and partly their effect, is to reinforce the credibility of the American nuclear deterrent. But one of these weapons, the Pershing II, is exactly as destabilizing as the MX Wieseltier rightly condemns: it is relatively vulnerable, and it can hit vital Soviet targets in a few minutes. It therefore constitutes both an incentive for the Soviets to hit it first in a crisis, and an incentive for the United States to use it first before it can be hit. The primary justification for new deployments in Europe is psychological, not military: to reassure the West Europeans. Weapons that can never fully still the fears of those West Europeans who worry about decoupling, yet stir the fears of those West Europeans who worry about increasing prospects of nuclear war, do not do the job.

Wieseltier seems to blame the West Europeans for their reluctance to improve the conventional balance, a reluctance that forces the West to rely on the threat of a first strike for deterrence. But he must understand that this results from their experience: conventional forces have not, in European history, proven to be an adequate deterrent. And deterrence, in Europe, can only mean the threat, not of nuclear retaliation, but of a nuclear first strike. The real flaw in the European case is Europe's inability to build a credible collective nuclear force of its own: this

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FROM WASHINGTON

Mediocrity

We were in Whitefield, New Hampshire, at the White Mountains Regional High School. It was 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 6, 1976, and Ronald Reagan, then trying to oust President Ford from the Republican Presidential nomination, was going to speak. My notes are before me now, and I must have been irritated, for I suddenly scrawled, "Balanced budget . . . inflation. . . . What a shallow man Reagan is."

You see, he had an idea that if New Hampshire didn't send its annual $60 billion to Washington it could do the job better itself, and save money. He tried to explain it, and couldn't, and for a day or two it dominated the local campaign. It was then forgotten. Everybody liked Reagan. He was affable and paternal, and he made friends everywhere on his three-day visit.

The other day I got out my two-volume *The American Commonwealth*, which I do every four years when the Presidential race begins. It has begun now. The race lasts longer than it used to. It lasts two or three years. No other democracy chooses its leader—potentially the most powerful person in the world—the way we do. It always fascinates me, and awes me, yes, and frightens me a little. Someday, I think, it is going to get us into trouble. We have a unique and very odd form of government indeed.

Lord Bryce explains Ronald Reagan in pages 78 to 85, in the chapter headed, "Why Great Men Are Not Chosen Presidents." It is a friendly, sympathetic treatise by the man who was British Ambassador to Washington, 1907 to 1913. The question he posed a century ago was why "this great office, the greatest in the world, unless we except the papacy, to which anyone can rise by his own merits, is not more frequently filled by great and striking men." The answer he offers is that the choice is generally for the safe candidate rather than the brilliant one. He says of the safe candidate: "Even those who admit his mediocrity will vote straight when the moment for voting comes. . . . Besides, the ordinary American voter does not object to mediocrity. He has a lower conception of the qualities requisite to make a statesman than those who direct public opinion in Europe have. He likes his candidate to be sensible, vigorous, and, above all, what he calls 'magnetic,' and does not value, because he sees no need for, originality or profundity, a fine culture or a wide knowledge." In short, he adds, "the merits of a President are one thing and those of a candidate another thing. To a party it is more important that its nominee should be a good candidate than that he should turn out a good President."

Of course he can have brilliance and electability too, but he had better hide the first. Most candidates recently have had little trouble. No President has served out a second term since Eisenhower. The percentage of voters has sunk for five elections. In nearly every case at the end of the second year there has been a disparaging reappraisal; Ronald Reagan is going through it now.

I must say I sympathize with Reagan. I disagree with him broadly, but who put him into this spot? We did! It's a next-to-impossible job. Here is Godfrey Hodgson in *All Things to All Men*: "The paradox of the Presidency is simply stated—if hard to resolve. Never has any one office had so much power as the President of the United States possesses. Never has so powerful a leader been so impotent to do what he wants to do, what he is pledged to do, what he is expected to do, and what he knows he must do." They all say it. Here is the comment of political scientist Thomas F. Cronin: "We have created a nearly impossible job description. We give our Presidents too much to do and too little time in which to do it." This, he says, creates "unrealistic expectations—the Presidency, an already impossible job, has become sometimes the sole focus of our hopes and aspirations as a nation."

So what does a President do when he is caught in a jam like this, faced with a

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
FEBRUARY 14, 1983

A SORRY STATE

As Ronald Reagan delivered his State of the Union message last Tuesday, he sounded like a changed man. Instead of blaming Jimmy Carter and past Democratic Congresses for the nation's economic woes, the President appealed for bipartisan solutions. Instead of bashing welfare cheats, he had a word of compassion for unemployed workers, working mothers, and even black teenagers. Instead of declaring that government was the cause of all domestic evil, the man actually said, "We who are in government must take the lead in restoring the economy"—at which point the Democrats arrayed before him gave a (faintly sarcastic) standing ovation. Indeed, some of Mr. Reagan's new buzz words sounded as if they had been stolen from the advance text of the Democratic Party's alternative State of the Union message. He is now for research and development, science education, and measures to address structural unemployment. He is for fair housing, womens' rights, and insurance against the costs of catastrophic illness. He did not mention the balanced budget constitutional amendment and, except for the school prayer amendment, ignored the rabid right's agenda. It seemed on TV as if sweet reason were beginning to prevail in the White House, and as if Mr. Reagan had decided, as he said, to seek solutions to America's problems that were "fair, balanced, realistic, and bipartisan."

So much for appearances. The phrase "stay the course" did not pass Mr. Reagan's lips, but it is the essence of the program he presented. In reality, that program is just as unfair, unbalanced, and unrealistic as it ever was. It is unlikely to attract bipartisan support, and it is unlikely to solve America's dire economic problems. As a result, Mr. Reagan's central assertion—that "America is on the mend"—seems hollow.

The President cannot bring himself to admit that his original economic program of huge defense increases, massive tax cuts, and draconian monetary policy has had anything to do with the pain and persistence of the present recession. He still believes that "our deficits come from the uncontrolled growth of the budget for domestic spending," and anyone who looks behind the thin veil of the President's proposed "comprehensive freeze on federal spending" will find more cuts in domestic programs to finance a new round of imprudent increases for defense. His freeze is on total federal spending. His much-touted $8 billion cut in Pentagon spending for fiscal 1984 is only from the level previously projected by the Administration. Mr. Reagan is not proposing to cancel a single proposed weapons system; instead, against the advice of his Joint Chiefs of Staff, he is planning a demoralizing freeze on military pay at a time when the services were beginning to retain experienced and technically trained personnel.

The Administration's minuscule and misdirected defense adjustments will still leave real outlays for fiscal 1984 about 9 percent above their 1983 levels—$25 billion higher. That money will come again out of domestic spending, including programs that primarily benefit the poor. These proposals aren't just unfair; because they lack credibility with Congress and the public, they are also unrealistic. Mr. Reagan came to office on a wave of consensus that defense spending needed to be increased—by 5 percent a year, he said in the 1980 campaign. Now polls show that he has lost that consensus. Mr. Reagan's disingenuous spending freeze—implying that all programs will be hit equally—will further undermine the public support he needs to govern.

Wresting leadership from his hands, Congress is likely to cut defense more than the President proposed and to cut domestic programs less. Unfortunately, it is also likely to reject his standby tax increase proposal to control federal deficits. Many Republicans reject the idea of a contingency tax because they fear Democrats will use it to fund new programs. Democrats reject it because they contend Congress would be ceding policymaking power to an automatic trigger mechanism. But both the Republican and Democratic State of the Union messages stressed the primacy of restoring growth to the American economy. Both stressed the need for lower interest rates and reduced federal deficits. The Reagan trigger tax

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is designed to prevent deficits from reaching $300 billion in just a few years. It is a faint admission by this supply-sider that Americans are not over-taxed, after all, and that they need to pay for the services they want.

By abandoning the rhetoric of economic simplicity in favor of a rhetoric of complexity and patience, Mr. Reagan implicitly admitted the failure of the odd, fevered concoction known as Reaganomics. His own economic advisers are now predicting a growth rate of only 1.4 percent next year and an unemployment rate above 10 percent into 1984. If those numbers are accurate, America is on a very slow mend indeed.

But there is reason to hope that Democrats and Republicans can agree on some long-term approaches to America's structural problems. The two State of the Union messages contained remarkably parallel proposals in education, job training, research and development, hospital cost containment, possible tax reform, an aggressive export policy, and rebuilding public facilities. The question is: do both sides mean it, or was it all just reassuring centrist TV rhetoric? Mr. Reagan's record in all these areas is unrelievedly negative. The Democrats' alternatives no doubt were put forward more sincerely, with real appreciation of the past role of government in building the nation's railways, ports, roads, and universities. But the Democratic message, too, had its flaws. We can't complain that the party didn't try—but we doubt that so many talking, walking heads succeeded in doing more than confusing the TV audience. The message was cool, programmatic, and unpolemical, but—except when Tip O'Neill quoted Hubert Humphrey—it was dull, bloodless, and uninspiring. The Democrats might have done better by allowing each of their Presidential contenders to have a three-minute shot at parading his mental wares.

The Democratic message also tended to obscure differences and difficulties. Even though there was a disclaimer that the problems are difficult and Democrats don't have answers to all problems, the party skated over the fact that Senator Bill Bradley's "fair tax" plan is controversial even in the Democratic Party. The message offered "rebuilding America" as a job-creating growth formula, but avoided mention of the cost and the method of payment. Senator Robert Byrd's proposal to force the Federal Reserve system to lower interest rates contains the danger of a reignition of inflation. And Mr. Byrd's pledge that Democrats would "protect every working American" contained just a whiff of a promise that imports will be restricted.

Foreign policy figured too little in either State of the Union message. The Democrats declared themselves for arms control, but they did not assert a dedication to the protection of vital American interests abroad. In fact, the assertion of a goal to make America energy self-sufficient by the year 2000 was combined with a reference to U.S. dependence "on a frail (energy) lifeline that begins thousands of miles from our shores, exposed to all the hazards of international conflict," which seemed to hint that someday America might be able to isolate itself from involvement in the Middle East.

The President's glancing treatment of foreign policy was even more regrettable, especially in view of the peace offensive mounted by the Soviet Union since Yuri Andropov's accession to power. Mr. Reagan was justified in calling for a demonstration "by deeds as well as words" that the Soviets respect treaties and the rights of other countries. But to Americans and foreigners worried about no progress in the arms talks, he offered no more than assurance that "we are prepared to carefully explore serious Soviet proposals." He did not say that he was prepared to treat serious proposals seriously or to advance any serious new U.S. proposals.

Over the past few weeks, Republicans and Democrats have shown—in the compromise on the seemingly intractable issue of Social Security—that they can do more than talk about bipartisan solutions to American problems. To the rage of his party's right wing, Mr. Reagan agreed to hefty tax increases to keep the system solvent, and Democrats, despite objections from the retirees' lobby, agreed to a cost-of-living freeze. Suddenly there is doubt that the pact will hold, as Democrats try to make benefit cuts contingent on tax increases for the wealthy and as Mr. Reagan tries to extend the COLA freeze to programs for the poor. In the two State of the Union messages, Americans were treated to verbal assurances that the parties are dedicated to conciliation. Social Security remains a test of their ability to deliver on those assurances. Until the next election, when voters again have an opportunity to choose between the parties, interim solutions to any of America's problems will have to be bipartisan. It's time for negotiations to begin.

NOTEBOOK

□ FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "Meanwhile Hitler rules Germany with an iron hand. Future developments are uncertain, but ominous possibilities threaten. Hitler tends to emphasize nationalism at the expense of his earlier socialistic pretensions. He will not be able to satisfy his followers long with such internal reforms as he is likely to make; he will be expected to move toward stronger military power and rectification of the nation's boundaries at the expense of Poland, and possibly of France as well. Italy with her Balkan allies shares similar ambitions. The logic of the situation leads toward a new bloc with these Fascist states at the center, in opposition to France and the Little Entente. The traditional European balance of power is by way of being restored. If events take this course, the world must fearfully await the spark which will ignite the high explosives." ("The March on Berlin," editorial, February 15, 1933.)

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Another safari on the supply side.

THE CRACKPOT CENTER

SOME FIVE HUNDRED of Wall Street's notables took out a two-page ad in *The Washington Post* on January 20, imploring President Reagan to do something about the "structural deficit." This group, organized by the indefatigable Peter G. Peterson and calling itself the "Bipartisan Budget Appeal," contends that the federal budget is now permanently out of kilter and that the expectation of big deficits in 1984 and 1985 is the main villain, driving up interest rates now, crowding out investment, and choking off recovery.

This view is one of two contending schools of thought that are laying claim to the post-Reagan political center. The other view holds that curing the recession is the way to cure the deficit, not vice versa, and that a worldwide recovery must be negotiated among the major industrial nations through a coordinated mix of stimulative monetary, fiscal, industrial, and trade policies. About a month ago, the moderately liberal Institute for International Economics, headed by a former Carter Treasury Department official, C. Fred Bergsten, put out an eloquent brief arguing this position, signed by twenty-eight prominent economists from fourteen countries. One of those twenty-eight economists, Lester Thurow, has been striving to make this the mainstream Democratic Party view.

These two views, of course, are inconsistent with each other. Thus it was more than a little startling to find among the signers of the Wall Street ad not just Peterson, William Simon, John Connally, and half the *Fortune* 500, but also scores of prominent liberals—including C. Fred Bergsten and Lester Thurow.

What is going on here? What is going on is yet another safari on the supply side, with Democrats once again cast as the bearers. The press has been persuaded that this is a good political story: Wall Street is finally joining the Democrats in telling President Reagan that enough is enough. "60 Minutes" gave Peterson a rare safe-conduct pass and a long segment of soft questions. *The New York Times* ran a front-page story and reprinted Peterson's cover letter to the President. The message of the "Bipartisan Budget Appeal" is that it may hurt, but President Reagan must at last get tough about federal spending. He has got to quit being a softy about entitlements. He must swallow hard and sacrifice his deficit. It's time to put aside partisan differences, and, working together, deflate our way to recovery.

Amid the hundreds of investment bankers and corporate executives were scattered the names of just fourteen professional economists. The shortage is telling, and it was not for lack of effort. Peterson approached most of the country's most prominent economists, and most turned him down. The nonsigners included all of America's Nobel Prize winners in economics and all but one of the more than twenty former presidents of the American Economic Association. Neither Galbraith nor Friedman, neither Laffer nor Heller lent their names. About the only thing Keynesians, monetarists, and supply-siders can all agree on, it seems, is that you *can't* deflate your way out of a recession.

"It's the old Herbert Hoover approach," says Yale economist and Nobel laureate James Tobin, who sent Peterson a letter in which he declined to sign the appeal. "Peterson wants to raise taxes, which reduces private consumption—and cut programs, which reduces public consumption. You can't increase demand by cutting demand." Moreover, the Peterson prescription says virtually nothing about the key role of monetary policy in either strangling or stimulating a recovery. If fear of a big deficit in 1985 is responsible for high interest rates in 1983, why did interest rates begin tumbling as soon as the Federal Reserve loosened the monetary screws? "Failure to mention monetary policy is a major omission," says Joseph Pechman, the Brookings Institution's director of economic studies, who also declined to sign.

Lester Thurow, who did sign, now says he was snookered. When Peterson initially approached him, Thurow recalls, the emphasis was to be on restoring equity to federal spending, getting control of the big deficits in the "out years," and promoting recovery now. When the penultimate draft said nothing about monetary policy, Thurow asked that his name be taken off. He was assured that a clause would be added. It wasn't. The other sleight of hand was the implication that all five hundred signers of the ad endorsed Peterson's cover letter to President Reagan. "The letter was even more hard-line than the ad," says Thurow. "I never saw the letter. I am older but wiser."

FOR LIBERALS, the bait was apparently the prospect of co-opting some prominent Republicans into an implicit challenge to the Reagan Administration's spending priorities. But in the ad, and in the letter to the President, that got lost in the fine print—and it's all too clear who was co-opting whom. "I was pleasantly surprised that they had people like Simon and Connally criticizing the military build-up," says former Carter inflation adviser Alfred E. Kahn, who signed. "But I certainly don't feel that anti-Keynesian policies are what's called for."

The Peterson ad is a public relations masterstroke. It creates the illusion that all right-thinking people are worried mainly about the "structural deficit" of 1984 and 1985, rather than about the depression of 1983. But what created that big structural deficit, anyway? The culprit, of course, is Reaganomics—as the President's critics had warned in 1981, when Reagan insisted you could have a massive personal and corporate tax cut, indexing, a defense buildup, and a balanced budget all at once. Predictably, the Reagan tax programs slashed Treasury revenues, while the tight money negated the

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deficit's expected stimulative impact. Today, the deficit is indeed structural—it gets bigger and bigger even with a recovery, precisely because the Reagan program eroded so much of the tax base. A better monetary policy and closing the corporate tax loopholes opened in 1981 would go far toward solving the problem. But it is a bit cheeky of Wall Street and the corporations to chide Reagan and Congress for the structural deficit in 1983, since it was they who persuaded Congress to give away so much of the tax base in 1981. We told you so.

Herbert Stein, former President Nixon's economic adviser, writes an acerbic column in *The Wall Street Journal*, in which he takes on all the loony theories of the Reagan years. Stein delights in demolishing the crackpot right. It must have been painful for him to take on the crackpot center, for one recent column was far more polite than most. It was titled "Deficits Are Not Depressing." He is right. What *is* depressing is to see so many Democrats signing their names to an appeal worthy of Herbert Hoover.

Bob Kuttner

C'mon—debt's not so bad.

By Deficits Possessed

DEMOCRATS are having fun these days skewering Ronald Reagan on his own balance-the-budget rhetoric. It's hard to resist. The man who came to power denouncing federal deficits as the root of economic evil is now the biggest deficit spender in history. In this fiscal year alone, Reagan's deficit will be larger than the deficit Carter built over four years. Democrats can taste political blood—and it's the color of Republican red ink.

Yet the Democrats are so afraid of being labeled deficit spenders that they cannot unite on a serious program to put America back to work. The best they have mustered so far is a $5 billion public employment proposal to create 300,000 jobs—at a time when at least 12 million Americans are unemployed. Even this timid proposal won only tepid support among Democrats. Reagan's threat to veto the bill was enough to send them scurrying. "The terror of the deficit issue on the Hill is palpable," says David Smith, Ted Kennedy's economic aide. "The polls keep saying that the people believe the deficit is ruining the economy. And few people around here are prepared to tell them anything different."

Yet virtually all economists now agree that it is the other way around—that the recession is the chief cause of the present deficit. For every 1 percent rise in unemployment, automatic increases in federal spending for unemployment compensation and reduced tax revenues result in a roughly $30 billion expansion in the deficit. The expected fiscal 1983 deficit of $200 billion would shrink to about $50 billion if the unemployment rate were 6 percent. (The "structural deficit"—the deficit remaining at what the Administration would consider full employment—amounts to roughly 1 percent of the gross national product.) At that point we could eliminate the deficit with minor increases in tax rates, or by reducing unemployment still further. A now chastened Reagan says that recovery is the key to reducing the deficit, and he's right. Unfortunately, his path will not lead us there. The Administration itself is forecasting sluggish growth for 1983 and virtually no change in the unemployment rate a year from now. Martin Feldstein, chairman of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, says that unemployment will remain high for years.

STAYING the Reagan course will only increase joblessness and heighten the danger of an even greater collapse. Another year of double-digit unemployment will further erode the confidence of business and consumers, increasing the chance that some external shock—say, a major international banking failure—could push us into another Great Depression. Yet the miscellaneous collection of counterproposals coming from the Democrats thus far are almost exclusively concerned with long-term productivity: how to encourage growth industries, more research and development, better technical education. The notion of using government spending to reflate the economy is dismissed out of hand. The report of a Democratic task force on economic policy chaired by Representative Tim Wirth of Colorado states flatly: "We reject any economic program that projects annual federal deficits of $100 billion or more well into the future." Representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri says: "There is an understanding that we can't spend our way to a recovery."

It is an odd conception of economic recovery that does not depend upon more spending, whether by business, consumers, or government. With factories operating at roughly two-thirds capacity, there is no hope that business will go first. The massive tax giveaways of 1981, which were supposed to lead to an investment boom, were a bust. In the winter of 1981 economic forecasters predicted that by the following summer consumers would be breaking out of their doldrums. Last fall, lower interest rates pulled the housing and auto industries from the brink of complete collapse, but no one forecasts a boom in either sector. A poor Christmas season and year-end surveys of consumer attitudes show continued lack of enthusiasm for spending in the face of widespread unemployment and declining real wages.

Although lower interest rates are a necessary condition for a recovery, they will not by themselves be sufficient. Five years of the tight-money monetarist theories of Milton Friedman and Paul Volcker have done

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too much damage. Businesses have been destroyed, and confidence in the future shattered. Only when business sees customers coming in the door with money to spend will hiring and investing pick up again. Only when customers feel less threatened by unemployment and have money in their pockets will they start spending again. And the only sector left with the capacity to stimulate this behavior is the federal government.

THE ASSUMED political constraint on deficit spending has led some liberals to hope that reallocating budget priorities toward nonmilitary spending might be enough to revive the economy. In the long run, military spending is a substantial drag on productivity and growth. But right now it is putting people to work. A recent analysis by the economist Barry Bluestone—no friend of the military—shows that the immediate effect of a guns-to-butter shift would at best be neutral. Certainly there is no evidence that even the most ambitious of the Congressional liberal proposals to reprogram the defense budget could create the needed new stimulus.

A robust recovery requires *both* lower interest rates and a net increase in government spending concentrated in direct job creation and tax cuts for low- and moderate-income consumers who spend almost all of their income. This means a larger deficit—probably on the order of an additional $30 to $40 billion this year. In the long run, such an active deficit will be less of a burden on the public treasury than the present passive one, which is too small to stimulate recovery, and which will continue to expand anyway because of the effect of slow growth in the budget. Refusing to accelerate the economy in order to economize on the deficit is like trying to save gas by not accelerating a car fast enough to get it over a hill.

Among the economic objections to larger deficits, the easiest to dismiss is the simple-minded notion, revived by Reagan and supported by most editorial writers, that deficits automatically lead to inflation. Since Reagan became President the deficit has tripled—and inflation has halved. This confirms the standard Keynesian view that when the economy is operating at considerably less than capacity, deficits are not inflationary but reflationary—increasing the amount of money in circulation for people to spend. The present deficit is actually preventing a collapse into a 1930s-scale depression.

Deficits *can* cause inflation when the economy is approaching capacity and the new spending cannot be matched by an increase in production. Hence the great fear of deficits in the "out years" one or two years from now when it is presumed that the economy will be operating close to capacity. But this assumes away the central problem of recovery. Where will recovery come from if there is not a burst of new spending? As Keynes showed fifty years ago, economic upturns are not inevitable. Keeping the economy depressed now because of the possibility of inflation in the "out years" is like denying food to a starving child because he might get into the habit of overeating.

A more recent argument against higher deficits is that they will prevent recovery because of their effect on long-term interest rates. Under the tutelage of Paul Volcker, Washington politicians have learned that federal deficits "crowd out" private borrowers in the money market. Because Treasury notes are the most secure of securities, federal borrowing to finance the deficit soaks up capital that might otherwise go to riskier private investments. This creates the possibility of a capital shortage, a rise in interest rates, and an aborted recovery. The prospect is compounded by the alleged hypersensitivity of the long-term bond markets to the prospect of a return to double-digit inflation. According to Volcker, current long-term interest rates contain an "inflation premium." Lenders are now demanding higher rates because they fear that somewhere in the future inflation might be rekindled, which would raise interest rates and lower the value of long-term bonds bought today. The fact that long-term rates have fallen less rapidly than short-term rates since the Fed began loosening credit earlier this year is offered as proof that the financial markets do not believe that inflation has yet been squeezed out of the economy.

FEDERAL BORROWING does tend to crowd out some part of the private-sector demand for credit. And long-term lenders certainly worry about inflation. But to make these considerations the determinants of the nation's domestic economic policy is absurd.

First, even as defined by Paul Volcker, this is still an "out-year" issue. Productive business investment is hardly being crowded out of today's money market. The Commerce Department reports that business executives intend to reduce capital spending another 5 percent in 1983 after a similar drop last year. Current business borrowing is largely aimed at substituting long-term for short-term debt. The year-long rise in the dividend payout rate is further evidence that corporations are not pressed for investment capital.

Second, the central cause of uncertainty in the bond market is Volcker's own monetarist policies, which have created volatility in short-term interest rates and have caused four major fluctuations in long-term rates in the last four years. Bond analysts now spend less time evaluating long-term economic conditions and more time trying to guess what the Federal Reserve is guessing what bond buyers are guessing what the Fed is guessing, etc. It is not so much an inflation premium that is being charged as an anxiety premium.

Third, too much is made of the slowness of long-term rates—which are now about 25 percent below what they were a year ago—to drop further. A recent report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development points out that long-term rates traditionally lag behind a decline in short-term rates. In fact, in previous business cycles, long-term rates were even slower to drop than in this one.

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Fourth, public borrowing per se is not necessarily any less productive than private borrowing. Investment in education, basic research, highways, and public health is as essential for sustained economic growth as investment in new factories. Conversely, private borrowing for speculation is not more productive than public borrowing for schools. The question is what is being financed, not whether the borrower is public or private.

But even granting, for the sake of argument, that Volcker is right, what is involved is a demand by long-term lenders that the present recession be extended until they are convinced that their bonds are guaranteed against a return of inflation. To give in to that demand is to allow our financial institutions deliberately to prevent the nation's savings from being used productively unless their own narrow interests dominate policy. If this really is what is happening, then the only alternative to a long period of socially destructive high unemployment is direct public intervention in capital markets to assure the availability of capital for expansion. (Options include capital allocation by a reorganized Federal Reserve and a National Development Bank.)

THERE IS one last objection to expanding the deficit. It is the specter of an ever-increasing public debt that can never be paid off and that at some point will come crashing down on ourselves or our children. Those for whom the deficit is worse than a depression liken the nation to a doomed business that must keep running to the bank to meet its payroll and to pay the interest that mounts with each loan. But by historical standards the public debt is quite modest. It represents roughly 35 percent of our annual gross national product. In 1945 our debt burden amounted to 119 percent of G.N.P. And we were on the eve of the greatest economic boom in our history—in large part *because* of the World War II deficits that expanded incomes. It wasn't the war per se that got us out of the Depression, it was the willingness of the government to borrow and spend money on it. If the money had been spent on transportation, education, and job training, the payoff for the country's living standards and productivity would have been even greater. America in 1983 does not dominate the global economy the way it did in 1946. Sustained recovery will therefore require other policies to make industries more competitive and to use our capital more efficiently. But as every business and middle-class family knows, debt is a necessary ingredient for capital growth. The fact that the government theoretically may never pay off all its debt is no more significant than the fact that consumers as a group will never pay off their collective housing mortgages.

A willingness to accept higher deficits does not mean that any deficit will do. Not only did the Administration's deficits run smack into its tight money policy, they were also largely wasted on the zany Laffer Curve theory that the tax cuts would stimulate so much economic activity that the government would end up with higher revenues. Instead of putting people to work, the Reagan deficits generated an orgy of corporate mergers and real estate and commodity speculation. A deficit aimed at stimulating economic growth would have to be at least partially targeted to geographic areas of high unemployment, to business incentives and penalties tied to actual investment and hiring performance, to education and training, and to our delapidated public infrastructure. There is growing support among Democrats for this kind of economic planning. But unless such policies are tied to a serious strategy of reflation, they will have only a marginal effect on the immediate unemployment problem.

NOR DOES increasing the deficit imply that inflation is not a problem. Even without the kind of fuel and food price jolts that marked the 1970s, the economy is still biased toward inflation. When and if the economy expands, corporations, professionals, labor unions, and others with extraordinary market power will be able to raise prices and wages enough to choke off recovery. Since the present slow growth solution for out-year inflation is self-defeating, the answer must be found elsewhere. The most likely place is in standby authority for wage and price controls, mechanisms for longer term incomes policies, and strategies to stabilize markets in inflation-prone sectors like housing.

Clearly a strategy for reflation implies more, not less, government direction of the economy. This may explain the Democrats' trembling before the prospect of higher deficits, even when it is their constituents who are bearing the pain of hard times. Despite the disproving of every major tenet of Reaganomics in the last two years, the conservative ideology that spawned them remains so strong that most Democrats in Congress feel comfortable attacking Reagan only from the right. But by reinforcing the notion that reducing the deficit is more important than reducing unemployment, the Democrats have become accomplices to the Administration's dangerous policies. This gives Volcker and the Republicans all the political room they need to pursue their fundamental strategy of squeezing every last drop of inflation out of the economy by lowering real wages. It is bad policy for the country and bad politics for the Democrats. True, F.D.R. did campaign for a balanced budget in 1932. But Ronald Reagan is a lot tougher than Herbert Hoover was. Unless the Democrats start explaining that spending money is the only way to a recovery, they cannot offer a credible solution to the immediate crisis of unemployment. Without such an alternative, voters may have trouble understanding why they should give the Democrats the keys to the White House.

JEFF FAUX

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Fifty years ago, Adolf Hitler glided into power.

THE VIEW FROM THE REICHSTAG

BY WALTER LAQUEUR

West Berlin

THEY BEGAN to arrive an hour ago, and some are still queuing up. There was a far-ranging keynote speech, greetings were conveyed by the President of the Bundestag, the television cameras were whirring. Now my turn has come; I'm chairing the discussion. The panel is first rate, nothing much should go wrong—except that any debate can go astray. The occasion is not commonplace, for we are meeting in the Berlin Reichstag, the date is January 1983, and the discussion is about the events that occurred in this very place fifty years ago, almost to the day. I have the suspicion that even these veterans of a hundred speeches, discussions, and conferences are a little more agitated than usual, which is not unnatural under the circumstances. The *spiritus loci* affects the mind: once upon a time a great disaster took place, many millions of people were killed, world history took a different turn—and it all began on this spot. So this is something more than a routine academic occasion, and most seem to feel it.

Fifty years ago Hitler came to power, partly as the result of a genuine national mass movement, partly as the result of old-fashioned intrigue. President Hindenburg, the war hero grown senile, was persuaded to invite Hitler to head the new government. It was not an inevitable decision; Hindenburg had turned down the idea several times before. True, Hitler was the leader of the biggest party in the land; true, its rise, within four years, had been phenomenal. Still a mere sect in 1929, it had become almost overnight the second strongest party, and three years later it polled 37 percent of the total. But then, in the second half of 1932, there were signs of decline. In the elections of November 1932 Hitler lost two million votes. The party was financially bankrupt; it could make no further headway against the hard core of working-class and Catholic voters. There were splits among its leaders. Many contemporaries predicted that unless Hitler had some quick successes, the impetus of his movement would be lost forever. "The great onslaught of the Nazis has been defeated," the *Frankfurter Zeitung* stated in an editorial on January 1, 1933. Harold Laski, the oracle of the British left, said that Hitler would end his days an old man in some Bavarian village, telling his friends in the local *Biergarten* the same story time and again: how it had almost come to pass that he had overthrown the German state. And Goebbels noted in his diary on the last day of 1932: "What a horrible year it has been—away with it!" But Hitler did not spend his declining years in a Bavarian *Biergarten*, and this is why we are discussing him tonight.

The new Reichstag is a very modern, even elegant building, at least inside, with the stress on space and light. Seen from the outside, it has hardly changed; it is more or less the same castle-like site—minus the enormous glass dome that was the main landmark before 1933. The big meeting hall is full tonight: young people, old people, people well known and obscure. They follow the debate with evident interest. Seats were sold out weeks before, which, I am told, does not happen in the former German capital these days, even for the most famous pop stars. There was a long general debate in Germany a month or two ago, about whether the media and the authorities were not overdoing it. Would there ever be an end to the ruminations about Nazism and Hitler? One understands the impatience. The right thinks it detrimental to German prestige abroad; for different reasons, the extreme left feels uneasy with the subject. But the fascination among the general public is as strong as ever before; it is probably greater now than it was in the 1950s, when Germany was preoccupied with more immediate tasks.

The dead Hitler will not go away. Even looking out of the window, one is reminded of the legacy of Nazism: the television tower of East Berlin, and, right down at our feet, the Berlin Wall, symbol of a divided Germany, and the East German border police. When repair work is to be done on the eastern wall of the Reichstag, the East Germans must be asked permission; it can be approached only from the territory of a foreign country. If not for Hitler. . . . We shall have to return to the subject.

How to commemorate the greatest disaster in German history? Many German leaders pondered the question in recent weeks. How to explain to new generations that there was more to National Socialism than a handful of demagogues and criminals, the Mafia-Arturo Ui-Bertolt Brecht version of recent German history? That there was an immense amount of goodwill, of faith, of intense

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belief, and yes, even of idealism? Why did German soldiers continue to fight for years after it was clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the war had been lost? It was not only, not even mainly, the fear of the Gestapo that made them fight. One remembers the shining eyes, the quasi-religious faith, the willingness to accept sacrifices. Among the lessons to be learned from the Nazi experience, one of the most important is that the intensity of belief of the believers, and even their personal integrity, should never be the yardstick for judging whether an idea is good or bad. A great many excellent people have believed the most pernicious nonsense throughout history, and not only in Germany.

The Reichstag: an older friend took me around when I was a boy, and I remember some of the sights, above all the impressive entrance. I only later learned that the Germans had not been lucky with their parliament. There has been a Reichstag ever since there was a Reich, which is to say since 1871, but for the first twenty years it met in a porcelain factory. By the time they finished the new building in 1894, Bismarck was no longer there, and, in any case, parliament was not the place in which the important decisions were made. The inscription, "To the German People" was chiseled on the entrance only during World War I, when the going was no longer good and popular support was badly needed. Then there came a time, ten years perhaps, from 1919 to 1929, during which the German parliament did play a political role broadly comparable to that of the United States Congress. At the end of the decade, the antidemocratic parties of the left and right had a majority, and effectively prevented parliamentary government. They also made the Reichstag a laughingstock; there were obscene interruptions, sessions had to be suspended. In the public mind the Reichstag became the *Schwatzbude*, the symbol for idle talk. The real decisions, the Nazis predicted, would be made in the streets.

THEN HITLER CAME. How they underrated him, his allies and his enemies alike! "Berlin Remains Red," the Social Democrats and the Communists proclaimed in their editorials and leaflets. And Hitler's conservative allies were so sure: when the coalition was set up on that January day they said, "We've got him tied hand and feet." True enough, apart from Hitler there were only two Nazis in the Cabinet. Surely they could outvote him any time. Poor idiots. They did not realize that there would be no more voting.

Hitler was appointed at 11 a.m. on January 30, 1933. On the same evening there was a huge torchlight parade right here in front of the Reichstag, with flags and drums and sundry brass bands. Among the observers was his French Ambassador, François Poncet; the balcony of his embassy, next door to the Reichstag on Pariser Platz offered a grandstand view. "A stream of fire advancing mightily into the heart of the capital," he noted in his diary. The clacking of the jackboots, the rhythmic slogans, the fighting songs evoked some dark premonitions. François Poncet was a formidable intellect; he was made a member of the Academie Française in later years. He saw what was coming, which did not prevent him from extolling the virtues of appeasement for six more years. Marinus van der Lubbe, the young Dutchman arrested the fateful night of the Reichstag fire, never attended a university. He was not a formidable intellect; he left school at fourteen and became a vagabond. But he had realized, as he told the German police interrogating him, the moment Hitler came to power that there would be war.

THE SUBJECT of the discussion is "Fascism as a nondemocratic method of solving a crisis," a topic not of purely academic interest. We again confront a crisis, and the great majority of the members of the U.N. have chosen nondemocratic solutions in any case. There is more than a little Western ethnocentrism in the assumption that parliamentary democracy is the norm and dictatorship the exception in the contemporary world. In 1933, on the other hand, the civilized world was thought to be democratic—Mussolini's Italy was an aberration, Russia was a backward country, and the Balkans did not count. As the Depression deepened in the early '30s, there were rumors in the air about coups. The *Voelkische Beobachter* reported in January 1933 that a distinguished American named Colonel House had declared that President Roosevelt would be a dictator, and a great many Americans (German readers were told) thought like Colonel House. Anything seemed possible in America, but it still appeared most unlikely that a civilized, democratic country in the center of Europe would become a dictatorship. Surely the trade unions, the churches, the army, the police, the whole state apparatus would not stand for it, nor would Britain and France and the Little Entente stand idly by. It seemed impossible to imagine.

Again the scene shifted to the Reichstag. Hitler had no majority; he needed one more election. It was a gamble, but he had taken, and was to take, much greater gambles in his life. Nazi propaganda had been far more effective than the rest taken together, and now, from an inside track, with the authority of the state supporting him, with his speeches broadcast three times daily over the state radio, he thought he was bound to get what he wanted. Hitler and Goebbels also made it clear that this would be the last election for a long time, perhaps forever. When he entered his new office, Hitler said to his confidants that no one would get him out of this building alive. This prediction was borne out by events, but the immediate task in January 1933 was to make sure that no one could displace him.

On the evening of February 27, at five minutes past nine, Hans Floeter, a student of philosophy and theology, was passing by the front entrance of the Reichstag on his way home, minding (as he said) his own business. Suddenly he heard a noise as if the glass of one of the windows in the building had been broken. He stopped, and within a few seconds he heard the same

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noise again and saw, or thought he saw, the figure of a man leaning out of the window of the Reichstag restaurant. Next he saw a flame, whereupon he started running, to tell the police guarding the building. Only two or three minutes passed before he found the sergeant in charge, who needed another couple of minutes to ascertain that it was not a false alarm. At 9:18 the fire brigades started to arrive, but they realized presently that they had come too late. There were several fires spreading rapidly, and there was little they could do. The fire raged for two hours; in the end little more than the walls were left. Meanwhile, another police patrol had seized a young man in the corridor, half-naked, obviously a foreigner: "Why did you do this?" the lieutenant shouted. The young man responded weakly, "Protest, protest." It later appeared that he had used his jacket and shirt to set fire to the curtains here in the great meeting hall.

Hitler was having dinner that night at Goebbels's apartment. In the middle of the evening there was a phone call, but Goebbels (he later said) refused to believe the news, and told Hitler only after he had verified it. They left the meal in a hurry, and, sirens wailing, sped to the Reichstag along the Charlottenburg Chaussée. Hitler shouted, "Now I've got them!" Goering had already arrived at the Reichstag and had reached the same conclusion independently. The Nazi leaders could not have cared less what happened to the Reichstag, but they realized that a golden opportunity had suddenly arisen to smash "the Marxists," which meant the Communists, the Social Democrats, and, generally speaking, all who opposed the Nazis. Their newspapers and meetings were banned, and a few thousand politicians and militants were arrested. It was enough to give the Nazis the power they wanted.

DID HITLER and Goering really believe that the Communists had burned the Reichstag? They probably did, or they would not have gone through the legal niceties of the Reichstag fire trial in Leipzig, which found that although van der Lubbe was guilty, neither Georgi Dimitrov nor the other Communists arrested had been involved. But by that time, in late 1933, the Nazis were so firmly established that they could afford such minor embarrassment. Who, then, had set fire to the Reichstag? No one doubted that it was a case of arson. Many people all over the world thought that Goering had been responsible on Hitler's orders. It was obvious that it would have been an act of lunacy for the Communists, whereas for the Nazis this was exactly the pretext they needed. Poor van der Lubbe. The Nazis hanged him as a Communist, and the Communists denounced him as a provocateur, homosexual, and confidant of Nazi leaders.

But hard as many people tried in later years, no conclusive evidence was ever found for a Nazi conspiracy. On the contrary, a technical expert named Tobias concluded, after a meticulous investigation in the late 1950s, that difficult as it would seem for a single man to set this great building on fire so effectively, it must have happened that way. The Tobias report led to heated discussions, bitter polemics, even legal actions. Committees were formed and manifestos published. Some historians regarded it as no more than yet another attempt to whitewash the Nazis. The controversy is not over yet. But on the basis of evidence available today—and it is doubtful that we shall ever know more—it seems likely that neither Communists nor Nazis were involved, and that the half-naked, unbalanced Dutchman did it alone.

In retrospect, does it matter greatly? I doubt it. The Nazis were looking for a legal pretext to dispense with the law. If there had been no Reichstag fire, they would have used some of the documents found in the headquarters of the Communist Party, claiming that the "Marxists" were preparing an armed coup and that Hitler had to be given unlimited power. Once Hitler had been made Chancellor, it was clear that there was only one way to stop him: by force. Neither the Communists (who still saw the Social Democrats, not the Nazis, as the main enemy) nor the trade unions (with a third of their members out of work) nor anyone else was in any way prepared to do it. The Nazis were not playing according to the old rules, and their antagonists suffered from a disease that proved fatal: lack of will.

FOR THE LAST twelve years of its existence, as during its early period, the Reichstag had no home of its own. It did not really matter, for its meetings in the *Kroll Oper* were short and infrequent. The Reichstag was convened once or twice a year to listen to a speech made by Hitler on important occasions, such as the invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the defeat at Stalingrad. They would shout "Heil," there would be a standing ovation, and then they would file out: no questions, no discussions. "The world's most expensive choral society," irreverent Berliners called it. In April 1945, the old Reichstag became the scene of the last real battle in Europe, and the Russians made a movie about it.

The Reichstag had some five hundred members in 1933. About a hundred emigrated, two hundred were arrested, some forty were executed—thirty-one by Hitler, seven by the Allies following the Nuremberg trial, four in the Soviet purges of the 1930s. Six committed suicide. When the Bundestag was convened in Bonn after the war, it included thirty veterans of the old Reichstag. Several are still alive. The new German Parliament, or rather its committee, still meets in the Reichstag, rebuilt in 1972, on the very rare occasion of a visit to Berlin. The tragedy of recent German, and European, history could be written on the basis of the history of one building.

The meeting has now been in session for three hours. Everyone has had his say. The time has come for some concluding remarks. But I suspect that the short speech I really would like to make would be out of place. It would be more or less as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen, historians too often tend to

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believe that everything happened because it was bound to happen. But the catastrophe would not have been a foregone conclusion if those opposing the Nazis had shown more tenacity and courage. Had Hindenburg resisted a little longer, the Nazi Party might have gone into decline; there could have been a split. The arrest of a handful of its leaders would have been sufficient to decapitate it. Hitler was irreplaceable; had he been eliminated, those who in January 1933 predicted the impending downfall of his party would have been proved true prophets.

But wasn't German democracy too far gone by January 1933, wasn't there a longing for strong leadership, a savior, a *Führer*, irrespective of Hitler? True, the prospects for democracy were not bright at the time. The Nazis might still have seized power. But a political general confronting them—one who was luckier, cleverer, and stronger than Kurt von Schleicher—might have come out on top. A year or two of quasi-military rule coupled with an upturn in the economy would have brought about a general sobering. Nor would Nazism in power without the unquestioned authority of a Hitler have been the same; try to imagine Iran without Khomeini. The struggle for power among the satraps would have weakened the regime. Goering was a repulsive bully, but his ambitions were not limitless. The fate of the enemies of the regime would not have been enviable, and the same is true with regard to the Jews. Austria would probably have been incorporated, and since the small countries of Eastern Europe preferred to quarrel with each other rather than cooperate, chances are that some of them would have become part of the German sphere of influence, whereas others would have passed into Stalin's orbit.

BUT WOULD a Second World War have broken out in Europe? It seems unlikely, what with the likes of Chamberlain and the French prime ministers, the deep longing for peace all over Europe, and the strength of American isolationism. Some arrangement would have been made with the Germans, and it would have lasted for a decade or perhaps two. Imaginary question from the public: "Do you imply that the borders of Europe today would still be those of 1938?" Answer: I imply nothing of the sort. No one can project beyond a decade or two. Czarism would have disappeared even if Lenin had never lived. History does not stand still. All I am saying is that the acute crisis of 1933 would have passed without a Hitlerian solution, that in all probability Berlin and Germany would not be divided today, that Europe and the world would be a different place. Question: "Mr. Chairman, you are no doubt aware that the fission of uranium was first demonstrated in 1938, not far from where we meet tonight. What if Goering would have been more interested than Hitler in scientific-technological problems?" Answer: I still doubt whether Germany would have beaten America to it. There would be a Committee for German-American Accord in Washington now, similar to the Committee for East-West Accord. "In other words, an attempt would have been made to freeze the world situation—but isn't this impossible?" My answer to the first part of the question is "yes," and to the second, "I don't know."

AS WE WALK DOWN the steps of the building, toward the exit, searchlights are directed at the Wall only a few steps from us; the border runs along Brandenburg Gate, and the Spree Canal a stone's throw away. The D.D.R., a perfect illustration that political situations can be frozen: 1984 with a semi-human face. The East Germans have been in some ways more efficient than the Russians in building Communism. There is no freedom, and they too face serious economic problems. Their per capita indebtedness is on the Polish level. But they have excellent runners and swimmers and the most efficient political police in the world. They have not been doing terribly well with their literature and the arts; half of their leading writers have left for the West in recent years. A regrettable matter, no doubt, but a country can manage with second- or third-rate talents.

And on this side, West Germany, no longer the country of the economic miracle. The city of Berlin is struggling with various social problems, not the least of which is demographics. As a result of its years of economic growth, Berlin now has the third largest Turkish population in the world, and every second child born in Frankfurt is of foreign parentage. The good years are over. There is more trouble ahead, and once again Germany is facing general elections.

How deeply rooted is German democracy? Chances are that neither of the two big parties will get an absolute majority, and the Greens may hold the balance. They believe in a better quality of life and they want to neutralize Germany, remove it from the mad arms race. They want to escape not only history but also geography. Wonderful young people, highly motivated, true idealists in an age of materialism. They will probably prevent a stable government during the next few years, something Germany needs more perhaps than any other major Western country at all times and more than ever when the going will be rough, as in the years to come.

Back, then, to 1933? Certainly not. History, contrary to widespread belief, does not repeat itself; it is, as Schopenhauer once noted, the same always different. A decade of economic stagnation or of small economic growth would not be the overture to the apocalypse. The country is as immune to Nazism as the rest of Europe.

But Nazism is not the only danger. At a time of danger, people still tend to get confused and are inclined as in 1932–1933 to do foolish things. They tend to listen to pied pipers who have changed both their apparel and their tunes. Next year the city of Hameln should commemorate the 700th anniversary of the appearance of

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the man who made this city famous all over the world. 1984 is a good date for the purpose, but they may, of course, prefer to abstain from excessive publicity. Nothing dramatic is likely to happen in Germany in the short run. Once the danger was militarization, expansion, and conquest. Today the country is no longer a great power, and Europe is no longer the political center of the world. Today "national interest" will be more often invoked in the speeches and articles of the left than of the right, and what they mean is not aggressive war but something between taking a low profile and neutralism. Had anyone predicted in 1942 that four decades later the U.S. would admonish Germany (and Japan) to make a greater defense effort, to stiffen its backbone, not to give in to blandishments, not to surrender to threats from outside, he would have been arrested, or, at the very least, his sanity would have been called into question. Yet such are the ironies of history and the end is not yet.

Not 'Deutschland über alles,' but 'Leave us alone!'

The Greening Of Germany

By Josef Joffe

POSTWAR GERMANY may be doomed to suffer the fate of Caesar's wife: it has to be above suspicion. This is an excruciating demand even for the most virtuous; it is impossible for a country like Germany which, though a model ally and model democracy, has to live down a fearsome historical reputation.

Twice in this century Germany tried to impose hegemony upon its European neighbors, twice it was defeated at the cost of untold human suffering. Fifty years ago, on January 30, 1933, the Nazis came to power after a free election; during the twelve years of their rule, German Fascism scaled murderous heights that dwarf anything perpetrated by its Axis allies. In the United States the Depression brought forth Franklin D. Roosevelt; in Germany economic disaster spewed forth Adolf Hitler. Even in more tranquil times, Germany did not act as an exemplar of international reliability. Those fond of historical analogy can always point to stunning shifts in allegiance: Tauroggen in 1812, when Prussia suddenly switched from Napoleon's side to the Czar's; Rapallo in 1922, when the Weimar Republic, in a surprise maneuver, made common cause with Soviet Russia; the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, which prepared the way for World War II.

Somehow, almost four decades of stable, democratic evolution have not erased Germany's troubled historical record. They have only muted suspicion, among allies as well as adversaries. The prosecution has rested its case; it will not drop it in our time. This is manifestly unfair, but it remains an encircling presence that the Germans may justly lament yet never forget. Indeed, over the past few years, as Europe and the United States have drifted apart, West Germany has come in for the heftiest share of the blame and epithets. When Americans rail at "Crypto-Finns" and "Euro-Cowards," when they bemoan the spread of "Hollanditis" and "Finlandization," they refer, above all, to the West Germans.

In part, that indictment reflects disappointment with an ally that, more faithful than the rest, embodied America's fondest myths about itself. If the United States was *terra nova*, the City on the Hill, a Lockean dream come true, Germany after 1945 offered an intoxicating chance to do it all over again two hundred years later. France remained *la France*, Britain a great power that had merely fallen on hard times. Germany, however, presented a *tabula rasa* beneath the ashes of the Third Reich. Here the American occupiers, soon to become guardians and patrons, could suddenly duplicate the American experience on alien soil. On the ruins of a hateful old order, America could build an offshoot of the New Jerusalem, a society beholden to the sacred legacy of the Founding Fathers and the blessings of the American way.

The shell-shocked generation of 1945 accepted the offerings of the victors, lock, stock, and barrel: CARE packages and capitalism, Marshall Plan aid and the Bill of Rights, free trade and federalism. For the first time in history, one part of Germany became unambiguously part of the West. And the West was America, more magnanimous than the rest and a shiny model of success to boot.

That love affair between victors and vanquished could not last. History and geography, flattened first by the tank tracks and then by the sheer weight of

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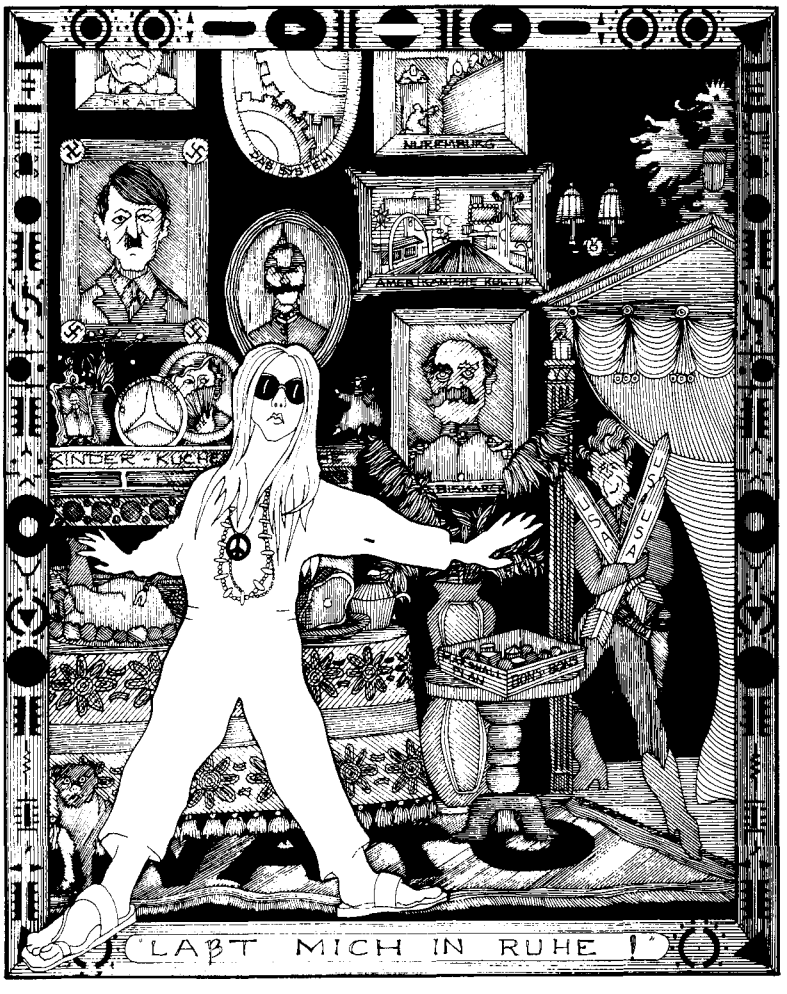
American munificence, were destined to reclaim their due. Today West Germany is in a state of transition, tugging against its moorings as much as it is buffeted by the world at large. In foreign policy, the Federal Republic is of the West, but it is not always with the West when it has to balance its *Ostpolitik* against its older (and sturdier) ties to the Atlantic alliance. In domestic politics, the country is stolidly centrist, yet no longer quite immune to the threats (and temptations) of fundamentalism, as the rise of the nature-minded Greens and the peace movement has shown.

Why should "organic apples" or even bloody battles for a nuclear power plant in the marshes near Hamburg spell a challenge to the established order? How are those 300,000 Germans who marched against the Pershing II and cruise missiles in October 1981 different from the million Americans who gathered in Central Park last summer?



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The main difference is that mushy catch-all that the academic pulse-takers call "political culture." After the balloons had popped, after the last banner was furled, the Central Park protesters trudged off to work within the political system. They passed the hat, they collected signatures, and they put a freeze proposal on the ballot. Their German brethren-in-peace want something else: *eine andere Republik*, a different political system, as Petra Kelly, the leader of the Greens, put it last October. They are already ensconsed in several regional parliaments, and they might just vault the 5 percent barrier in the elections next March, landing on the front benches of the Bundestag in Bonn. The dicey arithmetic of the election will determine whether the Greens will merely add some "alternative" color to the drab proceedings of the Parliament, or whether they will in fact plummet like chicken hawks into the midst of those gray-garbed lawyers and functionaries who normally define the routines of the second German republic. Theoretically, Greens and Social Democrats (the latter were ousted from power last October) could add up to a numerical majority. And if they actually manage to agree on a chancellor, *les incertitudes allemandes*, as the French so elegantly put it, will make for some interesting times to come.

Who are the Greens and the German warriors for peace who would use "direct action" against the deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles on their soil, and what is *die andere Republik* they want? The 300,000 marching in Bonn in October 1981 and the 250,000 chanting anti-Reagan slogans last summer defy neat categorization, and so do their "alternative" politics. There are feminists and ecologists, pastors and pacifists, hard-core Leninists and starry-eyed idealists, the old Easter marchers of the 1950s and the younger radicals of the 1960s, left-wing Social Democrats and *Kultur*-minded Conservatives, neutralists of the right and neutralists of the left, students threatened by proletarization as status avenues are blocked by economic decline, and peasants threatened by the nuclear power plant next door.

Their ideology (if indeed it amounts to one) is neither left nor right, but *both*—suggesting a troubling confluence of the extremes in a common movement of protest faintly reminiscent of the 1920s and 1930s. There are the polysyllabic homilies of the 1970s that exhort "participation," "decentralization," and "emancipation," but also the far older, pre-liberal claims for *Heimat* and *Gemeinschaft*, those untranslatable German shibboleths that evoke "rootedness," tribal harmony, and social communion. As in the movies of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *das System* is held responsible not only for the evils of society—pollution, wage slavery, exploitation of man and nature—but also for the very personal misery and alienation of the individual. The economic theory of the Greens is a grab bag of dusty Marxism ("abolish the determining conditions of Capitalist production"), the Club of Rome (return to a "natural way of life"), and bad old autarky ("prohibit

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the export of capital," "reorient production toward the satisfaction of indigenous needs").

Students of prewar European Fascism might recall the historical antecedents of some of these slogans. Fascism (as distinguished from Nazism, with its orgiastic cult of blood, race, and anti-Semitism) was after all a movement that stitched together smatterings of the left and the right into a politics of resentment. It was as radical as it was reactionary, as proletarian as it was elitist. To the *déracinés* of World War I and the Great Depression, it held out the blinding promise of both freedom and community—of liberation from a corrupt, dehumanizing "system" and of submergence into a classless, organic whole cleansed of oppression and alienation.

AGGRESSIVE NATIONALISM was the glue that held it all together, and pacifist nationalism is perhaps the only common tie that binds the shaky coalition commonly labeled as the peace movement. "No German can tolerate this unconditional surrender of our people's interest to foreign interests, or accept this subjugation of our people's existential destiny to a foreign government." These words were not spoken at a 1931 Berlin rally protesting the Versailles Treaty. They were hurled fifty years later against American missiles to be stationed in Germany, written by the Protestant theologian Helmut Gollwitzer, a man with an immaculate democratic record and a prominent mentor of the peace movement.

"We must break the chains that drag us to the abyss," thundered Erhard Eppler at the Bonn peace rally. Mr. Eppler is no demagogue of the right, but a most respectable guru of the peace movement who, until recently, was also a member of the Social Democratic Party's national executive. The Greens are calling for the "step-by-step detachment" of West Germany from NATO, and their program proclaims: "Loyal not to the East or to the West, but to ourselves."

Are these Hitler's children? That indictment, most forcefully made in a recent collection of dazzling essays by Wolfgang Pohrt, a young German leftist, is both misleading and unfair—most of all to the many young people in the movement whose schools did not teach them enough history to remember their grandparents' *Führer* even secondhand. Moreover, unlike its bloody-minded forebears, the new German nationalism is Candide-like, inward-bound, almost escapist. Its message is not *Deutschland über alles*, but "Leave us alone": if we could only get rid of the weapons, we will get rid of war; if we could only push back "the superpowers," we will live in peace and all-European harmony ever after. It is nationalism, but it is "parochial," to borrow a term coined by the American historian Daniel Boorstin.

And yet there is a bizarre twist of history that links the grandparents to their progeny—and it is, ironically, the very aseptic and immaculately refurbished environment in which they grew up after the zero hour of 1945. The immediate postwar generation (the parents) may now be paying a harsh price for what one might call "truncated nation-building." Given the dismal failure of earlier political models, the Federal Republic evolved as a country without continuity, as a fragment floating in the here and now, cut off from its roots yet tied to the Nazi past by guilt, shame, and remorse.

Given the catastrophic end of the ultranationalist orgy of the Third Reich, the Federal Republic became a half-nation without national symbols—bereft of identity, patriotism, or any other underpinning of legitimacy. Its main source of legitimacy was economic performance. And the remains of nationhood were submerged in Europe and the Atlantic alliance. Instead of minimal ("healthy"?) nationalism, there was only the multinational ersatz of Europeanism and anti-Communism.

This proved enough for the shell-shocked parents. A generation later, however, the stage had changed. The old trans-Atlantic order that had provided the West Germans with a role and a raison d'être was crumbling. And the United States was reeling under the blows of Vietnam and Watergate, Afghanistan and the Ayatollah. Into that vacuum stepped a new generation which knew nothing of the War and the Cold War—seeing only the burdens of bipolarity and none of its blessings, instinctively searching for an identity their elders had denied them, and eager to shake off the burden of collective moral inferiority the founding fathers had bequeathed to them instead.

IF IT IS TRUE that the young shape their moral identity *against* their parents, then it should come as no surprise that Konrad Adenauer's children would eventually turn against the United States—the indispensable protector, yet lately both weak and overwhelming, both demanding and irresolute. America, after all, brought the Germans not only Marshall Plan dollars and military security but also "re-education" and the Nuremberg Tribunal. America was the constant reminder of an unspeakable stain on Germany's past, and so, one might add, was Israel as the heir of the victims.

There is a connection, then, between the war in Vietnam and the war in Lebanon. Fifteen years ago young Germans for the first time could unshoulder part of the handed-down burden by pointing to My Lai: "You are no better than we are." Last summer their younger brothers and sisters (as well as many of their parents) could unshoulder the rest by comfortably confusing Beirut with the Warsaw Ghetto. If there was no difference between the Nazis and Lieutenant Calley, between the S.S. and General Sharon, the moral score had at least been evened. Such a calculus does not satisfy the canons of rigorous moral analysis, but it is humanly understandable—certainly for a generation of Germans whose only encounter with the Holocaust was the American TV series of the same name.

And it is understandable that the young would seek to regain long-denied moral worth not only by "unmask-

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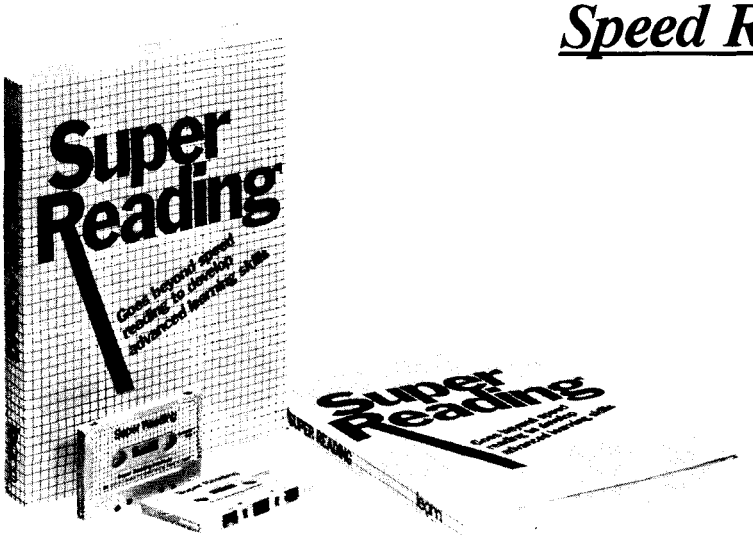

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ing" the American and Israeli arbiters of yore but also by plunging into the battle against Pershing II and cruise missiles—aided handsomely by some hair-raising nuclear asides on the part of the early Reagan Administration. Jane Kramer, writing about the peace movement in *The New Yorker*, notes: "For young Germans, and for some Germans who were young during the war, the idea that their country has a mission in a damned world is a kind of redemption. They have no history to attach to with any pride, and it is intoxicating for them now to think of themselves as victims of a madness other than their own. This is why there is an almost expiatory fervor to so much of the new pacifist politics."

If she is right, the world may be witnessing less a revolt against the United States and the West than a passing, but necessary, phase in the coming of age of Germany. On the other hand, "cultural regression" and "de-Westernization" (as the West German analyst Uwe Nerlich puts it) are trends no longer restricted just to a fringe or even the young. Nor is the battle only against new missiles, airport runways, and nuclear power plants. There is also a reaction against the central myths of industrial society and of the liberal polity, with its premium on procedure, bargaining, and compromise.

There are also echoes of *Sturm und Drang*, with its cult of feeling and "true" authenticity. There are echoes of nineteenth-century political Romanticism and its rejection of the Enlightenment which, like re-education, was exported to Germany on the bayonets of invading foreign armies. In both cases, national humiliation preceded the offerings of the West, tainting both the gift and the giver. In the nineteenth century, the French were targeted as an alien presence that had corrupted Germany's authentic *Kultur* and love of nature. In the late twentieth century, the young activists have similarly turned against the United States as a kind of malign "E.T." that is all the more dangerous for being both seductive and subversive—purveyor of McDonald's and Hollywood myths, of multinational corporatism and nuclear-tipped missiles.

AND THERE ARE echoes of the old nationalism in the new, pacific as it is. The drama of nationalism has reserved a peculiar, perhaps tragic, role for Germany. As late-comer among the nations of Europe, a resurgent Germany was bound to threaten the established order, and in turn to be threatened by it. As a result, the Germans could never indulge in the pleasures of a naive, "positive" nationalism—unlike the French, who could take their *mission civilisatrice* overseas, or the Americans, who saw no barriers to "manifest destiny."

For the Germans, the constraints were real and menacing, and with them came a sense of paranoia. In the nineteenth century many Germans felt that they were denied a "place in the sun." In the early twentieth century, persecution took the name of Versailles. And today the mission of pacifism is tinged with the message of boundless *Angst*. A leitmotiv of the peace movement is that Germany has been singled out again—as a "shooting gallery of the superpowers" who are conspiring to turn the nuclear holocaust against Germany, and against Germany alone. In the past few weeks, the French have been added to the plotters' list because they think that Mr. Andropov's arms control proposals do not quite solve the problems of Europe's tottering nuclear balance.

WILL THE MOOD jell into a real movement, turning a minority's version of reality into the *Weltanschauung* of the whole? Is Bonn like Weimar after all? The constitutional stays of the second German republic (where democracy worked) are infinitely more powerful than those of the first, where the political center was crushed by the ruins of the economy and the resentment of the outside world. Unlike previous incarnations of Germany, the Federal Republic is part of a Western community that is far sturdier than the post-1919 order of Europe. Experience, moreover, tells us that the young do not move into positions of power with their views unsoftened by the rigors of reality and middle age. Finally, there may be less than meets the headlines. For the observer, journalist, or academic, pathology is always more enticing than health. Hence the fascination with a movement that has suddenly rekindled the old German uncertainties tends to obscure some far more benign (and banal) facts about contemporary West Germany.

The real miracle of postwar Germany is not the economic but the political one. When the Germans took to reconstruction and democracy with a vengeance, the jury hesitated. Would democracy really flourish in this alien soil? The Germans replied with their ballots. Voting participation has hovered between 70 and 80 percent; during the 1950s and 1960s, the splinter parties of the right and the left disappeared one by one.

The West Germans became model Europeans and model allies who were much more diligent on defense spending during the 1970s, the decade of détente, than was the United States. Even the invasion of Afghanistan three years ago, which marks the beginning of today's all-too-current trans-Atlantic disaffections, did not fray, but indeed strengthened, West Germany's attachment to America and the alliance. In a European-wide Gallup poll taken early last year, three-quarters of the West German respondents had a "favorable" opinion of the United States. In Britain less than half had such a high opinion of their American cousins.

No nation can escape its history or geography. But if history has a hold on the future, which part of the web is decisive? The decades of nationalism, which invariably led from isolation to disaster? Or the postwar years, when democracy and alliance led to prosperity and respectability? For every peace marcher there are ten stolid burghers who do not see the alliance as an insult to their national dignity. They may like a little green and pink in their lives, but their past has also taught them to let temptation pass when it marches in formation.

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Spiders

E.O. Wilson: Let me remind you that people everywhere, a large percent of the population, at a very early age have already developed a deep horror at the sight of snakes or spiders with nothing more than gentle nudging from their parents, if that. Yet, in spite of the fact that parents constantly reinforce their children against going near electric sockets, automobiles, knives and the like, phobias against such objects rarely develop.

Marvin Harris: Let's go back again to the possibility that these phobias are genetically programmed – which I'm willing to grant. The overwhelming bulk of the socially conditioned response repertories of different human societies consists, by your own admission, of culturally determined rather than genetically determined traits. Then it seems to me that when one offers a cogent culturological explanation of these ph
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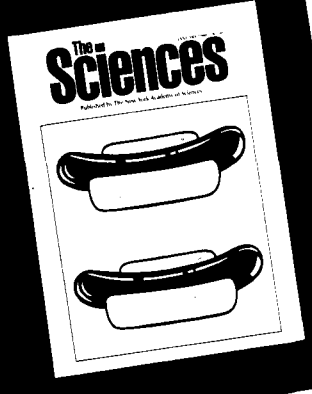

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Far from Bayreuth

If you know Wagner's *Parsifal* and if you have seen Hans Jürgen Syberberg's *Our Hitler: A Film from Germany*, you will not be surprised that Syberberg chose to make a film of Wagner's work; nor will you be surprised by the director's general approach. But this *Parsifal*, among its fascinations, does have a surprising new aspect.

Parsifal
(Triumph Films)

Syberberg's obsession with Wagner is now familiar. The first film of his to be shown in the U.S. was a 104-minute condensation of a five-hour interview, made for German TV, with Winifred Wagner, the composer's daughter-in-law (TNR, April 1, 1978). Wagner, musically and otherwise, is present in several other Syberberg films. One of the most vivid images in postwar German cinema is in *Our Hitler:* the toga-clad Hitler rising from a grave that has a stone marked RW (see photo, TNR, February 2, 1980). And, in Syberberg's view, *Parsifal* must be the most representative of Wagner's works, the most beautiful/silly, exalted/pretentious, noble/vicious—all the contradictions that Syberberg patently finds in German character and behavior. The score, which (I think) he uses uncut, is a succession of marvels that coalesce into a gigantic marvel; yet the libretto, or poem as Wagner called it, is less than completely cogent. The atmosphere is as spiritual as anything in Wagner; yet he explicitly intended the work as an Aryan, anti-Semitic allegory. (More contradiction on that point: the first conductor was a Jew.) *Parsifal* idealizes again Wagner's view of male innocence beset by the temptations of woman (Tannhäuser enslaved within the Venusberg, Siegfried cutting open the armor of the sleeping Brünnhilde and exclaiming naively, "*Das ist kein Mann!*"); yet the Parsifal-Kundry encounter in Act Two is one of the most perceptive rites-of-sexual-passage in drama. (Kundry entices Parsifal by speaking of his mother—more than a decade before Freud.) Writing from Bayreuth in 1889, Bernard Shaw said:

> And that long kiss of Kundry's from which he learns so much is one of those pregnant simplicities which stare the world in the face for centuries and yet are never pointed out except by great men.

No wonder, then, that Syberberg, only the latest in a long line of German artists who have loved and loathed their country, should respond to *Parsifal*. Still a question persists, one that leads to the surprise mentioned earlier. Why did he film a work that was already famous in another medium? His previous films have been entirely his creations. Here he began with a new recording of *Parsifal*, and, except for bits of the music rehearsals under the credits and a few snatches of random voices after the finish, he simply suppled "visuals" to accompany that recording. Why?

The answer begins to be suggested by a statement of his:

> Just as the composer was inspired by a legendary evocation of the Middle Ages in his desire to express ideas which were of his own time, I am basing my approach on the fact that the work is one hundred years old and that I can therefore describe its significance throughout time.

Ascribe the last phrase to the energy that an artist needs in order to do anything at all—no one knowingly creates just for next week—and his approach becomes clearer while we watch the film. This view of *Parsifal*, as a classic text chosen by a later artist for contemporary definition, puts Syberberg's film in a *theater* tradition, not a cinematic one. That is the surprise. His film derives, fundamentally, from Adolphe Appia.

Appia (1862-1928), the Swiss theater visionary, had revolutionary views of production that have hugely influenced Western theater in the twentieth century. His strongest love was for Wagner; all his life he worked on designs for Wagnerian productions. Few of them were ever realized—he participated in only six actual productions of any kind in his entire career—but they changed the theater's ways of seeing. Appia was shocked by the old-fashioned staging and design at Bayreuth, which had been prescribed by the composer; he wrote:

> Wagner made but one essential reform. Through the medium of music he conceived a dramatic action whose center of gravity lay inside the characters and which at the same time could be completely *expressed* for the hearer. . . . But he did not know how to make his production form—his *mise en scène*—agree with his adopted dramatic form.

In 1892 Appia sent a package of designs to Wagner's widow, Cosima, the guardian of the Bayreuth shrine. She returned the package unopened, but Appia continued to dream-design for a threatrical revolution of Wagner that would fit the revolution in the music. He got only three Wagnerian production chances, half of his whole practical career: one of them was *Tristan and Isolde* for Toscanini at La Scala in 1923, and neither of the others was *Parsifal*. But his designs for *Parsifal* figure prominently in the treasury of his work.

Syberberg's film does not in any detail come from Appia, but ideationally it is the result of an intent that began with Appia and has since flourished. Appia was the first conceiver of productions who recreated the inside of his head on stage, rather than reproduce the world

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Seven Samurai. Kurosawa's great work, in its original 208-minute version may be slightly too much. (I prefer the 160-minute version.) But it's essential experience.

Sophie's Choice. Meryl Streep's performance is the only reason—though a strong one—to see this collapsed rendition of an inflated novel.

Time for Revenge. An Argentine radical's clever vengeance on the System. Twisty, tight, well acted and directed.

Tootsie. Almost as good as they say. Dustin Hoffman is just as good as they say.

SK

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outside classically or romantically or realistically. What he wanted to reify on stage was his imaginative response to a work. That, exactly, is Syberberg's basic intent, though of course his response is his own, nothing like Appia's.

Syberberg puts before us, not just a film of the opera, however symbolic or impressionist, but absolutely everything that *Parsifal* evokes in him: about art and politics and history, about film and theater, about the possible exorcism of the demon Wagner himself. While the rich, almost extravagant music floods our hearing, Syberberg feeds our eyes with as much as he can crystallize of what that music—that music's very existence—has done to him.

The *Parsifal* story gets told well enough, but this is not a consistent eccentric version, as a modern-dress or a science-fiction version, for example, might be. We watch a cascade of connections, the play of associations hauled out by other associations. Some of the elements in the film are easily understood, perhaps too easily. When Gurnemanz leads Parsifal to the castle in Act One, they go backward through German history as represented by an alley of flags, beginning with the swastika. Behind Klingsor in Act Two, the watchtower of a concentration camp can be seen. The waxworks-museum heads of Marx and Nietzsche and Wagner are sometimes part of the décor; so is a three-dimensional facsimile of André Gill's famous caricature—Wagner inside a huge human ear, hammering away; at one point Parsifal is seen against a ridge that turns out to be Wagner's face in horizontal profile. Amfortas's wound is an entity quite separate from his body, so that it seems a possession more than an affliction. Syberberg represents it by a thick folded napkin on a pedestal next to the ailing king's couch: in the napkin is a bleeding gash. (It suggests a vulva. The wound, which he got from Kundry, may be a figure for carnal seduction.)

Most of the film's actions and details, however, must be taken only as phenomena that affect us or don't. Two of the performers we see are also singers on the soundtrack; most roles are mimed with lip-sync. That in itself is neither novel nor troublesome. But Syberberg chooses to have Parsifal mimed first by a stripling adolescent boy, then, after Kundry's kiss, the role is mimed by an even younger girl, with Reiner Goldberg's strong *Heldentenor* coming out of each Parsifal in turn. At the end the boy and girl embrace chastely. I don't believe that this device "means" anything: it's intended to jar preconceptions and provoke new scrutiny, not to fill any pattern, Freudian or otherwise. Dolls are suddenly used as characters, then discarded. The Flower Maidens are posed immobile against rocks while they sing of caressing Parsifal. The penultimate image is a skull, crowned with a bishop's miter, lying on the ground. The last image is of Kundry, her arms and long hair embracing a small wooden model of what I take to be the Bayreuth Festspielhaus. And much more, all of it intended only to represent Syberberg's visions, for us to use if we can or will.

FROM ACT II OF 'PARSIFAL' © TRIUMPH FILMS

Contrapuntally, as in *Our Hitler*, Syberberg insists on a kind of Brechtian candor, to keep us aware that fabrication is in process. Everything is played against a black cyclorama, on which slides are often projected. The lighting of a scene often changes while we watch. Almost all the scenery is meant to look like scenery. Sometimes we see the board floor of the studio. Near the end, projected on the cyclorama behind a scene, is some film footage of the conductor, Armin Jordan, shot during the recording session.

Yet, in the midst of this torrent of images combined with "exposé" of image-making, most of the acting performances are quite traditional. The Gurnemanz is much younger than usual, but he is the poem's Gurnemanz, beautifully played by Robert Lloyd. (Lloyd also sings the role beautifully. The other singer who appears is Aage Haugland, the Klingsor.) Amfortas is feeling mimed by the conductor, Armin Jordan, to the good baritone of Wolfgang Schone. Yvonne Minton sings Kundry powerfully, while that miraculous actress Edith Clever mimes this problematic role with an intensity that holds it in fiery focus.

Jordan, who conducts in many European opera houses, here leads the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Prague Philharmonic Choir. The text is sung in German, with subtitles. The recording is, fortunately, in Dolby stereo. Syberberg uses the "old" screen size, one-third wider than high.

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The most significant previous film of an opera that I know is Bergman's *Magic Flute* (TNR, November 29, 1975), and a comparison with Syberberg brings out a paradox. To Bergman, Mozart's opera was a *cinematic* challenge: he combined a conventional stage performance with the presence of the audience and with backstage data to create a purely filmic locus for the work. (Coincidence: backstage, during the intermission, Sarastro studies *Parsifal*.) Bergman, a veteran of the theater, transmuted a theater work into a true film. On the other hand, Syberberg, who has never worked in the theater as far as I know, strives here to make film into theater. Distant from Appia yet evolved from him, Syberberg puts his "definitive" theater performance on film because, in several senses, it would not be possible in a theater. Aided by designers of exceptional talent, he has created a sweepingly personal vision of *Parsifal* that places his film in a theatrical line—a director's "statement" of a classic. With a camera that is almost always slowly moving, in or away, panning or traveling, this is much less like pure cinema than a superb TV film of a production in a hypothetical theater.

Syberberg's final comment on *Parsifal*—possibly it's where he started—is the fact that he filmed it at all. *Parsifal* has a unique history. Beginning with the première at Bayreuth in 1882, it was zealously guarded as a sacred work, to be performed only in the hallowed atmosphere of Bayreuth, not on profane stages elsewhere. Except for some concert versions, this held true for twenty-one years. Then the Metropolitan in New York took advantage of the inexact international copyright law to produce it, despite German cries of profanation, on Christmas Eve, 1903. (A chartered Parsifal Limited train came from Chicago; the *New York Evening Telegram* published a *Parsifal* extra.) Other "profanations" followed in other cities, here and abroad, until 1914 when the Bayreuth copyright expired and *Parsifal* became unrestrictedly available to all opera houses. And now, a hundred years on, Syberberg makes a mere film of it, something that can be shown anywhere at any time.

But this fact, too, holds a contradiction. By making his film, Syberberg has utterly destroyed any remaining fake pieties about *Parsifal*. At the same time he has tried, through belief in the pertinence of his vision of the work, to consecrate it anew, for the protean, present-and-future theater of film.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The British Conquest

"I'm making a big sacrifice coming here tonight," said the customer to the box office attendant at the Manhattan Theater Club, "I'm missing *Nicholas Nickleby* on television." The poor deprived man, as a matter of fact, was about to see an English play (*Skirmishes*) featuring one of the actresses from the *Nickleby* cast (Suzanne Bertish), so the incident started me ruminating on the prospect of a whole new generation of American theatergoers being suckled entirely on British performance. Already a large segment of the sophisticated middle classes, dazzled by the technical dexterity of English theater and television, believes that works like *Amadeus* and *Brideshead Revisited* represent the summit of modern dramatic achievement; and since these people form the audiences for off-Broadway and resident company productions, the leaders of nonprofit theaters, previously occupied with originating theatrical works and developing native talent, now spend much of their creative time applying for green cards and filling out manifests for British importations.

You would expect to find Broadway producers lurking around the West End in quest of another *Cats* or *Evita*, but such overseas shopping tours somehow seem less appropriate to those who represent the last hope for new American play production. The consequence is a growing imbalance. Given the current market, many of our best playwrights have turned to screenwriting, while our actors are being praised for the way they affect British accents. I am not chauvinistic enough to suggest that we set up trade barriers to good foreign plays; rather, I am questioning why, in place of our own local product, we are starting to feature second-rate imports, many of them remote from our lives. My own opinion is that, with the exception of *Plenty* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, recent English state works have been no better than the American plays they have displaced, which is rather like buying a defective Morris Minor because of the reputation of Rolls Royce.

CATHERINE HAYES'S *Skirmishes* is the kind of economy-minded, secondhand model one can pick up at any used-car dealer's. There's nothing especially wrong with the engine; it just gives you a viewless and aimless ride. The play is free of useless or superfluous extras; it has some momentum; but it's not equipped to take you very far and the interior is drab and uninteresting. What action there is involves a sibling combat between two sisters over the body of their mother, who is dying of a stroke in an unmade bed. For the depressed, slatternly, totally embittered Jean, a bit of an unmade bed herself, the mother is already dead and buried; she has even written her obituary. For neat suburban Rita, the bedsores on her mother's incontinent carcass are evidence of Jean's callousness, a quality Jean makes no effort to hide ("How would you like to be up to your neck in raw sewage umpteen times a day?"). Jean at least has nursed her mother, while Rita has been busy bringing up children; the final moments of the deathwatch are meant to constitute a crisis unearthing all the resentments of a lifetime.

Fair enough, but what is revealed is neither very significant nor terribly original—Jean's failure to conceive children, her subsequent abandonment of her husband, her loathing of her life. Even these minor revelations, however, make her a more interesting character than prim Rita, who reminded me of that goody two-shoes, Olivia De Havilland, scoring moral points off Scarlett over the possession of Ashley Wilkes (the prize in *Skirmishes* is the deliquescent, shit-stained body of mother). Assumed to be comatose, Mom keeps shooting secret baleful looks at Jean, and after trying to scratch her face, finally expires having assigned all her worldly goods to Rita. Although Jean has awaited this death impatiently, she begins to mourn when it finally

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comes ("This is what it's like—this is what I wanted—is there anything else?"). The play ends with the sisters as estranged as ever in their varying degrees of grief.

In its unambitious way, the writing is spare; the dialogue is caustic; and the performances are honest, though Sharon Ott's otherwise good production is pitched too high for the small auditorium. But it's a long ninety-minute ride in the company of such passengers, especially when they reveal so little about themselves of interest. In *Skirmishes*, it's not the familiar family trio that's unsatisfying so much as the playwright's failure to illuminate it much.

CARYL CHURCHILL's *Top Girls* follows David Edgar's *Plenty* at the New York Public Theater, which puts Joe Papp right up there with the Shuberts and the Nederlanders as a leading import-export firm. *Top Girls* is a more ambitious play than *Skirmishes*, and its Royal Court production is extremely well acted, but it left me with a similar kind of dissatisfaction. Structurally, it's a mess. The scenes have a vague thematic connection, but little in the way of character or plot continuity. And accomplished as the writing is in many ways, the playwright is unable to focus or concentrate its intention. Like *Cloud Nine*, which followed a brilliant historical first act with a discontinuous, oddly irrelevant conclusion set in modern times, *Top Girls* suggests that Miss Churchill, dazzling in short spurts, has trouble integrating a longer piece of work.

The opening scene is promising. Five women, famed in history or legend, collect together in a London continental restaurant to discuss their lives. These include a Scottish lady traveler (Isabella Bird), a Japanese courtesan (Lady Nijo), a figure in a Brueghel painting (Dull Gret), a Chaucer character of uncomplaining obedience (Patient Griselda), and a fictitious female Pope (Pope Joan). Their hostess is Marlene, an executive of the Top Girls employment agency, who acts as a modern sounding board. Each talks out of her own biography and obsessions, so no connection occurs between them except for overlapping dialogue and actions: Dull Gret stashes meat and potatoes inside her apron while Pope Joan recounts the death of her clandestine child. For Marlene, these women represent the apex of female accomplishment, and the toast she proposes is to "the way we've changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements."

But what they actually reveal are the injustices women have suffered throughout history at the hands of men, and the subterfuges they have had to adopt in order to become the "top girls" of their time. The scene changes abruptly, first to Marlene's agency in London and then to her sister Joyce's home in Suffolk, as the play lurches into a study of the cruelties women are forced to commit in order to become the "top girls" of our time. Marlene has had a child, Angie, who she farmed out to Joyce at birth. A loutish failure, Angie has a presentiment that Marlene is her real mother, and comes to London to be claimed by her true parent. Marlene greets her coldly, and, in a final scene (set one year earlier), reveals that in order to achieve her career goals, she has doomed her own daughter to be a bottom girl all her life. Marlene's deep conservatism, her prejudice against the working class, her maternal selfishness, all suggest that in capitalist Great Britain, success for women is accomplished only by adopting the venal, callous, competitive procedures of men.

The theme is clear enough, and intermittently powerful; the performances are impeccable, with the seven British actresses in the cast transformed into a variety of convincing modern and historical characters. What is not sufficiently clear or convincing is the formal pattern. Ever since her first play, *Owners*, in 1972, Caryl Churchill has been a model of honesty, intelligence, and compassion in the English theater, and recently she has established herself as a source of theatri-

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cal originality as well. But her innovative inventions are now being achieved at the cost of a certain inchoateness at the root of her style, with the result that one leaves her recent plays more tantalized than fulfilled.

AFTER TRYING to make a case for the production of neglected American plays in the belief that they are at least equal to recent imports, I am embarrassed by the one example under review this week. William Mastrosimone's *Extremities* (Westside Arts Center) has more knuckles than fingers, a crude fist of a play being punched through a highly melodramatic production. After a relatively convincing beginning involving an attractive woman being terrorized by a brutal would-be rapist in an isolated rural house, the evening settles into a series of incredibly contrived twists and turns, proceeding on the implausible premise that, having subdued the thug and manacled him in the fireplace, the woman would rather commit murder than call the police (her argument is that the courts would inevitably acquit him and charge her with assault). Having made this bizarre determination, she sprays his eyes with Raid, scalds him with boiling water, tortures him with a paint roller, wraps an electric cord around his throat and pulls, pours gas over his body and threatens to ignite it, and finally decides to finish him off with a hammer (the vocal reaction of the audience to these various acts is more edifying than the events).

The woman, Marjorie, wields her hammer for most of the play, often threatening to use it on her roommate, Terry, whenever that poor innocent refuses to help her kill the intruder and bury the body. She also brandishes it at another woman friend, a social worker named Patricia, who is charged with the difficult task of trying to talk some sense into her through the medium of sociological jargon. Only when Marjorie discovers that the brute has a knife and has recently raped a number of ladies in the neighborhood does she allow her friend to call the cops. Having relented in her murderous impulses, she can now show the battered rapist some compassion, and he responds by curling up in the fireplace like a fetus and singing himself asleep.

It is the playwright's intention, apparently, to show how relatively mild people can be changed into murderers and tyrants in extreme situations, but since none of these people has any character outside the event, the theme is no more convincing than the plot. Plausibility is not enhanced much either by the acting or directing, which is equal to the writing in the way it resorts to swollen neck veins in order to create effects. Susan Sarandon plays Marjorie as if her career rather than her life depended on it. She's not very well equipped to show us genuine terror or hysteria, and neither is Ellen Barkin as Terry who expresses fear by holding her arms and throat a lot; James Russo speaks the part of the rapist as if he were a rusty wheel in need of three-in-one oil. *Extremeties* is the melodramatic equivalent of a TV sit-com—call it a sit-dram. It exists not for its own sake so much as for the response it can manipulate from the spectator. But I think I prefer a laugh track to the kind of vindictive animal noises being squeezed out of audiences at the Westside Arts Center.

George Konrád, Hungarian voice.

THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

BY TED SOLOTAROFF

Some years ago, when I was traveling in the Soviet Union, I was taken to the studio of a Georgian artist. Much of his work had a strong erotic or religious feeling, sometimes both together. We became friendly and I asked him whether all of these sensuous curves and devout figures and symbols might not get him in trouble. He replied that he was a Georgian artist, that he painted the culture of his people: his female forms expressed their regard for the generative principle, his saints were the bearers of their history of oppression and resistance. At one point he showed me a painting of a kneeling male figure shackled to a post by a collar and chain: it was titled "Self-Portrait." What about that? I asked. Couldn't it be taken as a protest against the restrictions of the artist in Soviet society? "People can think what they want," he snapped. "The chain and collar is my art. I cannot escape from it but it is what holds me to my place in the world. It is an obsession but it also tells me who I am, why I live. I painted it just after I recovered from a dangerous illness." When I returned to Moscow I related the incident to a writer who knew the artist. "I couldn't tell whether he was serious or ingenuous or evasive or cynical." "All of them," the writer replied slowly. "Like most of us."

I sometimes think of that story when I read the work of the East European dissident writers: Sinyavsky, Aksyonov, Konrád, Kís, Kundera, Hrabal, et al. There is a certain simplicity about them—a direct relation to the creaturely life of their people. On the other hand, they are subtle, devious, unexpectedly brutal, macabre—a kind of theatrical trafficking in the forbidden feelings as well as subjects, an easy recourse to the inhuman. There is also the obsessiveness that haunts their pages, a stylistic equivalent of the fatedness that presses down on their characters, both confining them and weighting them, giving them a dimension beyond themselves, the sense of having a destiny, however wretched or absurd it may be.

All of which, along with the political risks, goes into the perception of an inner necessity that we admire in these writers and for lack of which so much Western writing seems to be dying on its feet. Each of George Konrád's three novels is essentially the monologue of a Hungarian intellectual who can't stop talking because he feels so constrained by his experience, so burdened by the weight of the life around him, and so needled by his conscience that he must keep trying to deliver himself or at least exhaust himself into silence. One of his speakers is a case-hardened social worker; the second is a community planner in a treacherous bureaucracy; the speaker in *The Loser* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book, 336 pp., $14.95), Konrád's new novel, is a scarred and

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callous dissenter. Each of them is shackled to a situation which is unyielding and highly equivocal but from which he draws his saturnine vigor and lucidity, his "solitary invective," as one of them puts it. Though they are distinct individuals with their own voices, they are brothers under the skin, a family of deep-sea divers, existentially speaking, weighted down by their fateful positions, encased in inner concerns that enable them to resist the external pressures of the state that would otherwise disable them. Because they continue to choose the role that entraps them, the tone of their voices runs the full register of irony —baleful, mordant, sardonic, sarcastic, chagrined, wry. Written from what seems to me the same ongoing crisis of belief, these three fictional memoirs are psychologically signed by the same hand, provoked by the tensions of a fallen humanism.

YET THEY DIFFER considerably in literary texture and emotional impact. Konrád's first novel, *The Case Worker,* is the most artistic—a short work of formidable pathos. It is a tour through the lower depths of Budapest, conducted by a welfare worker who is resigned to "the faulty nature of things," who merely "steers the suffering this way and that," but who soon begins to succumb to the guilt of his dreams, the curiosity of his reveries: Gorky meets Kafka. One of his cases is a five-year-old idiot whose father has never recovered from being unjustly denounced and imprisoned as a collaborator. Old Bandula begs in the cafés, cannot hold a job even as an orderly in a morgue, but insists on keeping the boy, against the protests of his neighbors. Lying on the bare springs of his bed, while the naked child, tied into his crib, plays with scraps of food and his wastes—the former minor official tells the caseworker, T.:

> Remember all those principles, rules, and punishments? If I may say so, you're still a slave to all that. You rarely think of yourself—only, let's say, when you have a toothache. None of that applies to me. I'm no more human than my son. Let's have a cigarette. I'm a freak. Of course, that, too, is a human word.

T. is fascinated by this fringe of being, this last-ditch moral space the broken man and his permanently dazed wife insist on defending against the authorities. Then one day they abruptly abandon it, pass into the "terrible inviolable freedom" of suicide, and T. finds himself sitting on Bandula's bedsprings and watching the child, hairy, healthy, and reeking as a bear cub, gnawing on his vanished mother's brassiere. Another life, not much more lurid and phantom-like than the one T. is leading, begins to stalk his mind: he can give up his job and family and settle in here, keeping the child from the horrors of the children's asylum, taking in piecework for a living.

The experience of replacing Bandula is no less compelling for being a reverie—so intense and graphic is it that many readers mistake it for the fact. Moreover, by the end of his long day, T. finds that his own despair has somehow closed beneath him. He places the child for the time being and goes back to his other cases. "Let all those come who want to; one of us will talk, the other will listen; at least we shall be together."

Like Dostoevsky, Konrád is both a psychological terrorist and a compassionate witness; and in exercising these talents with the Bandulas and the other inhabitants of their woeful slum, along with the teenage suicides, battered wives, crippled workers, and other examples of nature's and society's derelictions that T. broods about, Konrád is carrying on the great theme of nineteenth-century Russian fiction—the forging of the human bond between the privileged consciousness of the writer and the mute despair of the people. He has also carried it forward to stand over against the mentality of state socialism.

Though *The Case Worker* does not deal with politics as such, Konrád is intent on pouring back into Hungarian consciousness the personal, the disruptive, the irremediable elements in life that Communist culture tries to leach out by its relentlessly collectivist, nationalistic, and positive ethos. In a historical analysis, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power,* that Konrád wrote with Ivan Szelényi, the authors describe the "marginal" writers who have taken the risk of distancing themselves from the official state culture because "in speaking of the human condition they could not derive from socialism optimistic solutions for the problems of illness, loss, death or even disappointment in love." *The Case Worker* is this wry comment armed and barbed and delivered with shattering force.

The City Builder lacks this clarity, concentration, and fierce intentionality. In

An engrossing and vivid account of Bertolt Brecht's life and work during his fascinating, trying Hollywood years

"Cook brings to the subject a fresh point of view, a skeptical attitude, and a strong style. He is a thorough journalist whose book may anger the Brecht establishment . . . This corrective study may be essential to a full understanding of Brecht."
—Library Journal

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Czech Voice

The Joke by Milan Kundera translated from the Czech by Michael Henry Heim

(Harper & Row, 228 pp., $15)

The Joke is Kundera's first novel, written in Prague in the early 1960s, published in Prague in 1966, banned in Prague in 1968. As Kundera notes in his preface, "its author was named in official documents as one of the initiators of the 'counter-revolution,' deprived of the right to work, and finally forced to emigrate." With its author a nonperson, this nonbook appeared in the West, in an English edition that was, according to Kundera, a manifold perversion—chapters rearranged, one chapter excised, and "everything simplified . . . a Joke for remedial readers." Now we have a new edition, with an entirely new translation of which the author approves and which rings completely true, and it is brilliant, compassionate, and wise.

The hero of *The Joke* is Ludvik Jahn, whom we meet in the early 1960s in the Moravian town where he grew up. He has come home for vengeance—the calculated seduction of the wife of Pavel Zemanek, who in 1948 led the attack on Ludvik that resulted in his expulsion from the Party. Much like Dostoevsky's Underground Man, Ludvik nourishes his hate, which defines and sustains his life, and he hopes to crown it by making love to Zemanek's wife Helena. Of the many jokes to which the novel's title refers, the main one—which the reader understands long before Ludvik does—lies in the hollowness of his vengeance, his final illusion. For when he makes love to Helena, cruelly and gloatingly, and when he finally, inevitably encounters Pavel Zemanek, he learns to his horror that his revenge is no revenge at all: Pavel and Helena's marriage is dead, and Pavel is delighted to be liberated from it by Helena's affair.

One of the central leitmotivs of *The Joke* is folk music, especially the Moravian folk music that Ludvik played as a boy and that he hears on his return, during the reenactment of an ancient ritual called The Ride of the Kings:

> *It was a sublime and polyphonic music:* each of the heralds declaimed his verse in a monotone, but each on his own individual note, so that the voices combined willy-nilly into chords . . . the voices came from various directions at various times and the result was reminiscent of a richly variegated canon.

The novel is structured like the music: most of its chapters are told by Ludvik, with polyphonic voices provided by Helena, by Ludvik's boyhood friend Jaroslav, and by a Christian Socialist named Kostka. In its final chapter the pace of alternation quickens to bring the several voices into a canon or fugue till the music dies away in a whisper of peace.

The peace, for Ludvik, is a long time coming. Kundera's brilliance resides in his ability to strip away the lies and disguises which Ludvik and the others need to survive, and which their society has institutionalized and sanctified. Ludvik, whose cynicism masks a life riven in two by the trauma of disillusion, is the best observer of his world: the bitterness that corrodes him sharpens his vision as well. About 1948, and the seductive joys of the "building of socialism," Ludvik says, "We were drunk with the thought of jumping on its [history's] back and feeling it beneath us, the illusion that we were the ones to inaugurate the era in which man (all men) would no longer stand *outside* history, no longer cringe *under its heel*, but direct and create it." He knows, because he propounded it back in the 1940s, the lie of folk music "national in form and socialist in content," which stripped folk music of its unique rhythms and roots and resulted in hymns to Stalin and "mass songs" about the collectivization of agriculture.

By 1963 the lies are set in concrete, no longer even partially motivated by idealism, monsters with their own momentum: the civil ceremony meant to wean a populace away from church christenings, at which attendance is not mandatory but is used as "a touchstone for evaluating people's sense of citizenship and their attitude toward the State, and in the end people realized that and came."

But if the society as a whole is damned, condemned to live with its lies, its slogans, and its propaganda, individuals may undergo a denuding process. Kundera incarnates this in the bad jokes that riddle his characters like gunshot wounds. There is the original joke, for which Ludvik was expelled from the Party: a postcard sent to a girl out of youthful lovesick impishness, reading: "Optimism is the opium of the people! A healthy atmosphere stinks of stupidity! Long live Trotsky!" There is the joke that time plays on Ludvik, rendering his suffering and the betrayed ideals of his generation not merely irrelevent, but incomprehensible to the new generation that Pavel Zemanek's young mistress represents. There is the terrible joke of Helena's suicide attempt, foiled by the grotesque substitution of laxatives for aspirins in a pill bottle. Cruel joke succeeds cruel joke, some invented by men, some devised by an indifferent god of history, some seemingly created by a mocking, jabbing deity who laughs at the foolish delusions of childish humanity.

What saves *The Joke* from despair, and rescues its brilliance from sterility, is Kundera's acceptance of our need for illusion, which he embodies in a woman named Lucie. Lucie is half-real, half-myth, appropriately considered by the village children to be a wandering fairy for whom they leave milk, bread, potatoes. She is to each man what he needs, to one a kind of Virgin Mary, to another a humbled Christ. She remains veiled and silent, unlike everyone else, whose veils, layer after layer, are peeled away, mercilessly and yet with a constant compassion that leavens and redeems the necessary cruelty.

Helena, for instance, is a crude and coarse woman. She thinks in platitudes and lives in poses. She is self-centered without understanding herself, greeting-card sentimental, rigidly self-righteous. With not the slightest comprehension of Ludvik's motives in courting her, she is so engrossed in her B-movie role that she interprets his ploys as genuine: "What joy, he wanted me, he wanted me all the more after I reminded him that I was married, because it made me more inaccessible, and men desire most

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what they consider inaccessible, and I drank in all the sadness from his face and realized he was in love with me."

All this is ludicrous, wincingly funny and pathetic. And yet Kundera does not allow us only to laugh at her. When she takes pills, after Ludvik's rejection of her, Kundera doesn't make her less foolish: she is still what she has been, mentally excoriating Ludvik yet "wondering what I looked like to Jindra [a boy in love with her], I probably looked a fright after the shock of it, or maybe not, I wasn't crying after all, just a bit upset." But her pain, her bewilderment are no less real for being trite. The humiliation of her aborted suicide does not rob her of an essential dignity, and Kundera forces us to recognize the woman who is suffering—not the woman under the masks, but the woman *of* the masks who is still, little as we may want it, kin of ours.

Kundera's wisdom culminates in the ironies and final resolution of *The Joke*. With no illusions left to cover his nakedness, Ludvik comes to an acceptance—of himself, his past, those who wronged him and those whom he wronged. He accepts the possibility of innocence in the midst of devastation, and the need not only to hate that devastation, but to commiserate with the things thus devastated. Music, that most innocent of victims, provides the final image: Ludvik joins his "most faithful, most guileless . . . friend" Jaroslav to play, again after all these years, the Moravian songs he loved. But resignation to the world of lies is mitigated by the joy that Ludvik and Jaroslav feel, singing and playing songs "where sorrow wasn't playful, laughter wasn't mocking, love wasn't laughable, and hate wasn't shy." And it is mitigated by the love which, finally and at long last, Ludvik can allow himself to feel and show and by which he can be made whole. "Hear ye, hear ye," cry the heralds of the King—Kundera lets us hear.

JOSEPHINE WOLL

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the main, Konrád is an intellectual who writes novels rather than the other way around. The point of view of each of his novels is a closely held first person one and, given Konrád's penchant for commentary and self-scrutiny, we are almost always listening to the teller rather than to the tale: consciousness is all. This is one reason why the reverie in *The Case Worker* is such an appropriate and effective device. But in *The City Builder* there is little to alter and complicate the speaker's awareness, to take him where he hasn't been. Konrád runs an intermittent narrative thread through the speaker's successive states of mind, opaque with metaphor and paradox, within which he struggles to explain and justify, lament and revile his situation as a guilty ex-husband and father and as a technocrat in a regime that has betrayed him and his ideals. The book aims to evoke and personalize the class consciousness of the intellectuals who participated in and still serve the revolution, but it does so in such a generalizing, introspective, and cryptic way that one suspects Konrád may have written it in spite of himself, haunted by the image of the Hungarian thought police looking over his shoulder.

WHAT SAVES *The City Builder* from the kind of rhetoric with which French radicals preen and torment themselves ("Assuming reality—even if only in name—is humiliating. Opening the window of my cramped and constant world to let in time, I try to figure out who is scratching and whining in this dark room . . ." and so on); what gives the book Konrád's stamp is the intense nagging that is going on behind the screen of his language between the speaker's sardonic resignation and his restless conscience: a couple that can't get along and can't stay away from each other; a perverse dialectic that generates the remarkable energy of his sensibility even when it falls into a manner. In the clear stretches of the speaking, that is when the force of events—the war, the Holocaust, the 1948 revolution—provide expressive scenes to go with the soundtrack, the planner's monologue suggests the personal testament it might have been.

The Loser is Konrád's effort to write that testament. It is nothing if not specific and outspoken: the direct experience and evolving attitudes of a veteran Hungarian radical. Bearing the same identifying initial, T., as the speaker in *The Case Worker*, he too has been through it and through it. Even more so: his horrors being political ones—battlefields, torture chambers, prison cells, and Central Committee meetings. Committed to the concrete, which in this case weighs a ton, Konrád makes himself shoulder the burden of T.'s history—from his entry early in World War II as a student anti-Fascist to his exit in the mid-1970s as a prominent dissident who ends up in a mental hospital where he finally can free himself of politics and can stop lying.

The grandson of a prominent Jewish merchant, scholar, and seer, and the son of an emancipated, even somewhat decadent land developer, T. loves the former but imitates the latter, his early life being highlighted by his precocious seductions. Even as an anti-Fascist courier he remains something of a *flaneur*, though less so than his younger brother Dani, who becomes his accomplice and betrayer, a man whom the politics of terror will deprave rather than merely corrupt. T.'s heady apprenticeship abruptly ends when he is caught, badly beaten, and forced to watch his girlfriend hang by her arms while he continues to withhold information. During the war he serves in a brutalized forced-labor battalion, lives with a partisan peasant woman, fights with a group disguised as Hungarian soldiers, is captured by the Russians, contracts spotted fever, is packed into a prison train with 5,000 other victims, most of whom die en route. The Red Army indoctrinates him and sends him back to Hungary as a propagandist; with his field radio and megaphone he creates droves of defectors who are then shipped off to Siberia. By the time the war ends, he has become a member of the anti-Fascist elite—most of them erstwhile poets, scholars, and editors who will soon come into power and, after a few euphoric and benighted years will, one by one, fall haplessly from it into secret prisons and graves.

SOME OF T.'s descriptions of the carnage, pillage, rape, and genocide of the Balkan front have a laconic Goya-esque expressiveness that give them a place in the annals of the creaturely viciousness and pathos of war. Also he has a clear-eyed view of the way men act—in both senses of the word. He presents the early Communist regime as a provincial version of the Stalinist theater of cruelty—the sadistic and treacherous wiping out the sensitive and principled, though with a good deal of role-playing

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all around. His later experience with the 1956 Uprising and the subsequent emergence of the twilight world of the dissident community—in both of which he plays a reluctantly prominent role and pays the price—is treated as a theater of the absurd with everyone trying to keep a brave or at least a straight face, beginning with himself:

> The truth is, you knew when to make compromises that, though necessary for survival, did not destroy your legend. You knew when to step aside and smile enigmatically, and when to scatter your private aphorisms through the urban folklore.

Yet the overall effect of T.'s adventures in the inhuman and his reflections on "the historical-philosophical farce" he has acted in tend to work against each other, to be dulling, finally, rather than chilling and illuminating. Again, it's mostly a matter of the primacy of the speaker's voice and consciousness. The Konrádian mingling of cynicism and scruple soon takes on its own theatrical air, a striking of poses. The guerrilla and freedom-fighter with his machine gun, the propagandist armed with his Bolshevik brutality, the self-serving dissident live on too easy terms with the man who has been there and suffered, who has seen too much of pain and death, brutality and treachery. Many of T.'s adventures strike a superficial note, as though they had happened to someone else, and on the deepest matters, he tends to be evasive: as his girlfriend hangs before his eyes and says to him, "It's real bad," he tells us: At that moment something in me died. There was now a murderer in place of my former self, who was willing to sacrifice his love and would do the same to his own son, just so that he shouldn't have to say anything. . . . I knew I was an accomplice related to those who had tied me up. All that was working in me was my insanely obstinate resolve to stay the way I was. . . . Sacrifice exists for itself, as does hatred, and everything exists for death. . . . I lifted my head and looked at Sophie's tortured lips, which were beyond forming words. I no longer wanted to save her spent body."

So much for Sophie who will soon be cut down so she can die, in an afterthought, at Auschwitz. She will not trouble T.'s conscience again, which is not surprising since she is hardly present in his thoughts here. T. is not becoming a murderer or torturer before our eyes. He is becoming a facile existentialist, formulating a studied response to a moral crisis he has stripped of its anguish.

So it will go through most of his moments of crisis. Whether he bravely refuses to betray his colleague and friend during the purges, or refuses to falsify his past under torture, or agrees to deliver the opposition government's foolhardy order to the Soviet minister in 1956, thereby ensuring himself another prison sentence at the very least—T.'s consciousness of what he is doing and why has much the same lack of effect that characterizes his acts of compliance with brutality. Here he is speaking of his state of mind as a Communist official:

> Oppression is simply an educational tool; let the people learn that they can wish only for what we wish for. First they'll be beaten into submission; then, through us, they will regain their self-respect. . . . What else could I become but a Communist? The war was over, but the fighting went on between old and new, good and evil. The bourgeois hoards, the Communist fights. He considers more and more of the hoarders his enemies; he provokes them, hurts them, and this makes him proud of himself. This part is fairly easy; what's more difficult is to fall in love with the party.

NO DOUBT such thoughts were thought. The point is that T. merely takes them in the stride of his sardonic equanimity. "Today I cannot argue with the man I was then: I look at him as though he were my son, though I am not moved by him." To be sure. But we are also to believe that the T. who begins speaking in this book from a mental hospital in a whirl of frightened and guilty images is a man worthy of our sympathy; just as he is at the end, when, in his final encounter with the inhuman, he assists his demonic brother in hanging himself but refuses to join him in death. From first to last, though, the immense destructiveness that T. has witnessed and immersed himself in has done little more than reinforce his essential aloofness—the ground tone of his voice, the bottom line of his experience.

Such aloofness may well overtake a Hungarian intellectual who chose the road, even only part of the way, to class power. As T. tells himself at one point: "Here's your chance to spill the beans about your class, to blurt out its unconscious secrets, write its collective memoirs." But what this comes down to are such "beans" as:

SLEEPING IN A CHURCH

Millville, Delaware: an old country church

Free to us, not covered by the lease,
mice, mice in the walls
that scamper back and forth
on the two-by-fours
all day and all night long; and a moth
with an eye on each wing
—beautiful but dead—
that blindly stares at the ceiling
where prayers, incorporeal but *real*,
hover and hover,
silently bumping into each other.
This church isn't used anymore
for praying: it's been retired,
restored and rented out
to summer people who push the pews
against the walls to make room
for the ping-pong table;
who leave us notes
about wasps in the shower
and occasional strangers who knock
on Sundays at the front door,
surprised to find tenants
in their nightclothes.
Each night, around midnight,
a cricket creeps out of the stove
to preach at us and the mice.
His two notes boom off the ceiling:
Get out! Get out!
You are not small enough!
You have no right!
We sleep well, despite the sermon,
but wake at 6 A.M., rubbing at gold dust
in our eyes. It's only the sunrise,
slanting through stained glass windows
to fall at the foot
of our bed in colored squares.

ELIZABETH SPIRES

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> It was quite a lark; a historical sleight-of-hand: with your pals you laid the foundation of intellectual class power, which was pretty nasty at first but which will in time become more pleasant and it will never be supplanted by another kind of power.

Whatever such aloofness may gain for the book as a document, it loses as art. Aloofness is never a basis for art because the way to the depths is closed to it; it lacks the will to struggle, being secretly preoccupied with the wounds of the ego. Hence T.'s conflict between awareness and conscience is often weak and equivocal and, unlike his counterpart's in *The Case Worker*, unable to be resolved: one reason why Konrád has to bring in the tangential issue of the brother's murder of his girlfriend and his suicide to end *The Loser*. Except that the ending does remind us of what T. actually is: he is less a loser, since he has never had much, morally speaking, to lose; he is mostly an accomplice.

AND YET, there are many moments when he is more, when he does not make light of the crushing weight of his experience, when the writing sheds its fitful, ambivalent ironies and becomes closely knit by strong feeling. These moments often have to do with T.'s pious grandfather and with his moral legacy, which now and then enters T.'s mind to strengthen or enlighten him. " 'Like drunkards we live in a fog of self-love,' " he remembers his grandfather saying, " 'and, confusing good and evil, we grope our way in the darkness and laugh when our neighbor falls' "—words that prophesy the political nightmares to come. At one point, T. comes upon a pile of fresh corpses in a forest, victims of a Nazi killer squad:

> The naked bodies are sexless; I can see they shielded the backs of their heads like infants as they were toppled over by a round of machine-gun fire. . . . A bearded man's head rests on a young girl's whitened thighs; the cold groins are as indistinct as a frozen indentation in a dirt road. Now you know how perishable is he who is so very like the earth, how little he differs from the clay he was fashioned from—he who was created by God in His image. . . .

And T. goes on to speak of the good and evil in this creature, of the one who "slipped a piece of bread to those hiding in the henhouse," and of the one who "pulled an old man in a hat from a woodshed." Another voice seems to be speaking to us at such moments of deep creaturely feeling than the garrulous T., alternating between his world- and self-weariness and his glibness. It is a voice buried deep in his nature, a source of energy and direction for the struggle his author might have made to provide a deeper account than this one of the nightmare of history that continues to obsess him. There is enough material in *The Loser* for five novels. I hope that the next time Konrád chooses, as he did in *The Case Worker*, to employ the extraordinary strength of his consciousness and the passion of his concern to bear the full weight of one of them.

'60 MINUTES' AND OTHER SINS

Newswatch: How TV Decides the News
by Av Westin

(Simon and Schuster, 256 pp., $15.95)

Media Unbound: The Impact of Television Journalism on the Public
by Stephen Lesher

(Houghton Mifflin, 248 pp., $13.95)

Five years ago Michael Arlen, *The New Yorker's* television critic, noticed something interesting. A generation ago, he said, it was common for Americans to say they were worried about the news. They meant they were worried about what was happening in the world. Now, said Arlen, Americans still say they are worried about the news but they mean the way the news is reported, particularly on television.

Five years later, they have more to be worried about. Television has not only become the news most Americans say they rely on; it has become increasingly competitive at both the local and network levels. That competition has bred a form of journalism, however dazzling, however successful as a medium for advertising, that leaves the public entertained but thinly served.

In a limited sense each of these books addresses that theme, but very differently. "There is no doubt that television news is the lazy person's way to keep informed," says Mr. Westin, and his book, *Newswatch*, is an enthusiastic primer on informing the lazy for fun and profit. Mr. Lesher's goal is more pretentious, "to lay journalism bare," and his tone is sweeping: all journalism is flawed and television merely makes "journalism's intrinsic weaknesses manifest." *Media Unbound* has many sound points to make: the wave of aggressive press negativism after Watergate; the excessive use of anonymous sources; the fashion for television reporters to play prosecutor; the self-importance of investigative journalists on TV who often get it wrong; the reluctance to admit mistakes or publish corrections. Unfortunately, the good sense is almost obliterated by a context of wild generalization and impenetrable writing, including my candidate for Ugly Sentence of the Year:

> Amplifying journalistic farrago to decibel levels beyond the wildest, drugged fantasies of even the most frenzied acid-rock freak is, alone a guarantee of widespread, irreversible absorption of misinformation.

My hunch is that Mr. Lesher started off to do a number on the CBS program "60 Minutes," found that a bit thin, and padded out his book with a few grand peeves about journalism in general. His analysis of "60 Minutes" is telling, if a little stale by now. He retraces some of the more melodramatic romps of Don Hewitt's irrepressible, middle-aged angels, Rather, Safer, Wallace, and Reasoner. He demonstrates that the program often appears to make up its mind on an angle and then relentlessly pursues only the facts that fit. But each of his examples seems to be leading us toward a smoking gun, which he never quite produces.

What I object to is making "60 Minutes" represent the sins and strengths of TV journalism in general. I am not convinced by this explanation: "Because,

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within television news, '60 Minutes' reaches the most people regularly while exemplifying both the best and worst aspects of modern journalism, *Media Unbound* pays greatest attention to that program." That smells of ex post facto rationalization. "60 Minutes" is not typical of anything but its racy self, and perhaps its crass imitator, "20/20." "60 Minutes" is an exotic mutation and when it wears itself out, all it may leave behind is a parade of imitation Mike Wallaces browbeating hapless newsmakers in small towns.

But it is when Mr. Lesher hits us with his grander peeves about journalism that the rational ground gets very soggy. Because electronic journalism has "stupefying reach, immediacy and impact," he says, it can influence "crucial decisions." He gives this example:

> The popular notion that American military forces are incapable of overcoming revolutionary insurgents abroad, for example, was instilled by the journalists covering Vietnam. Many of them were incorrect. Nonetheless, current national debates on the propriety and feasibility of using force to achieve diplomatic goals invariably start with the assumption by many that military intervention against foreign insurgents cannot succeed.
>
> The political and ethical wisdom of any such action is, at the least, eminently arguable; the equation of political goals and ethical ideals with military capability, however, is a sophism fashioned by journalists, not by good historians.

Are we supposed to conclude that only wrong-headed journalists doubt U.S. military capability against foreign insurgents? Or that ethical/political questions —like how much force to use—do not affect military capability?

Mr. Lesher extends this into two larger complaints: one is that the media got the story wrong in the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam, misleading Americans into thinking they were losing the war; the other is that the media greatly exaggerated the importance of Watergate. In each case, there is some ground for his argument. But something in his Cassandra-like tone leaves the unspoken implication that the media steered the nation wrong on both Vietnam and Watergate —a conclusion I do not share—and will again.

Nor do I share his judgment that television has "merely made journalism's historic weaknesses manifest." Television has amplified some weaknesses (oversimplification and haste) but it has built on some of journalism's strengths (immediacy, urgency, shared experience). Television has corrected some print weaknesses (political bias, anonymous sources) and it has carried others to new heights (sensationalism, intrusiveness, trivialization, disconnectedness).

Although I found this book something of a fizzled firecracker, I am grateful to Mr. Lesher for drawing attention to a passage by the late Dr. Michael Halberstam, to whom the book is dedicated:

> The overriding sin . . . is the persistence of advocacy reporting. Too many reporters have their stories in advance and gather facts to support it. . . . Too many reporters start an assignment knowing everything and, not surprisingly, leave without having learned one damn thing. Advocacy disguised as straight reporting is an abomination. It is the ultimate insult to tell readers that we are too dumb to make up our own minds, and that we require a reporter to do it for us.

Amen to that.

For those who are not familiar with the scene, Mr. Westin's *Newswatch* very accurately captures the ethos of network news, that peculiar brew of hubris, complacency, and self-doubt that shapes the collective psyche of the men and women who, to use his phrase, "decide the news." The book's charm is its unguarded, authentic insider's tone. It is very like the TV news product it celebrates: breezy and jumpy, full of fast cuts and non sequiturs, impressionistic and somewhat incoherent, but very readable. All that is missing are the commercials. Yet in a sense the book is all a commercial. Mr. Westin does not hate what he does for a living or himself for doing it. He proudly relates his contributions to the evolution of television news, although other network producers might carp that he seems to congratulate himself for inventing wheels they thought already patented.

A GENERATION of seasoned foreign correspondents might read with mild amazement Westin's observation that, as an executive producer, "I have tried to encourage correspondents and producers to study their area, to attend lectures and to build up reference files." It is true that network correspondents are catapulted around the world, often with little time for preparation, but to suggest that, as a breed, they need to be told to know their territory is a little gratuitous. On the whole, Mr. Westin is quite patronizing to reporters. "At some point in every journalist's career," he writes

> the news must be touched. Contact has to be made first hand with a story and the elements of that story must be examined, sorted out, catalogued, clarified and distilled into a report and transmitted to an audience. Somewhere, sometime, he or she has to confront the reality of the news.

Mr. Westin permits himself some ritual gestures toward those who think TV news a little vacant, or "shallow & glib," as he quotes one viewer as complaining. His defense is that "TV news never claimed to represent what an informed citizen needs to know"; and his remedy is that viewers should read newspapers and magazines as well. He fears that viewers "have cheated themselves by relying so heavily on television."

He also gets fierce with local news, lambasting "news consultants" for introducing "heavy show business gimmickery, corrupting the news broadcasts into entertainment 'shows.'" He says that local stations produce "even more hype" during ratings sweep weeks, when "oversensationalized series are inserted in the nightly newscasts." Presumably plain old sensationalized

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stories will do for nonsweep weeks.

The passage most resonant to me was this:

> God forbid that network newscasts would ever become 'happy talk' shows. But as network news programs are thought through for new time periods, it is certain that even more of the techniques that were developed in local stations will be adapted. It will be a time for caution. What sells is not necessarily good. TV is always in danger of being reduced to entertainment. If it is, if show business techniques are allowed to distort information rather than to help convey it, then, as Edward R. Murrow warned, television will merely be a box with a lot of lights and wires.

God and Ed Murrow notwithstanding, there are many who feel that even as Mr. Westin was penning those words, that is precisely what was happening to network news. Tony Schwartz recently put it this way in *The New York Times*:

> At 22 minutes, the networks' evening newscasts have never been more than snapshot and headline services, where substance is intrinsically secondary to style. But as the profits from news have risen, so have competitive pressures to be more popular and appealing. The result is an increasing emphasis on eye-catching gimmicks, slick packaging and alluring promotion of highly-paid stars.

News should be a lot more fun for the lazy.

ROBERT MACNEIL

Robert MacNeil is co-host of "The MacNeil-Lehrer Report."

A SIXTIES SELF?

The Life Cycle Completed by Erik H. Erikson

(Norton, 108 pp., $10.95)

Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left by Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter

(Oxford University Press, 403 pp., $27.95)

Getting Saved from the Sixties: Moral Meaning in Conversion and Cultural Change by Steven M. Tipton

(University of California Press, 364 pp., $19.95)

Erik H. Erikson's slim volume, a "review" of his ideas on the "life cycle," will inevitably invite comparison with Freud's *Outline of Psychoanalysis*: both written by distinguished men in their eighties, anxious to get at the essentials of their own thinking, and determined to do so in a literate and forceful manner. Erikson has never been without a sense of humor—a willingness to be wryly amused at what can happen not only to others but to his own kind: the twentieth-century psychological theorist whose ideas have been distilled into slogans—as in "identity," and "life cycle," used in the title of this book. When he writes, in the preface, that he hopes his title "sounds just ironic enough not to be taken as an all-inclusive accounting of a perfect human life," he is, of course, reminding us of our recent, secular desperation, the reverential (not to mention dogmatic) aspect of our involvement with the workings of the mind.

Erikson developed his ideas in the course of a dedicated clinical and intellectual life. He was interested in connecting our inner lives to what obtains outside: the press of race and class, or religion and culture and national tradition, and not least, of history itself. He had no patience, really, with the old nature/nurture polarity; he was at pains to integrate various notions of what makes us the individuals we are—as opposed to carving out one or another ideological parcel of land, and using it as a base of operations for polemical forays on all possible foes. He favors the word "wholeness" with respect to our moral and personal development, and it applies to his own thinking, as well—a long, richly textured evocation of human psychological complexity. His well-known "stages" and "phases" have become elements of a twentieth-century bourgeois, agnostic iconography, and he has been the first to take notice and wonder why.

The book is not intended to break new ground; but it does offer touching and instructive moments. Erikson joins Bruno Bettleheim in stressing the revealing distortions that have plagued the translations of Freud from German into English. Freud's *ich* became our abstract "Ego," even though, Erikson reminds us, this *ich* is at times most clearly meant to be the direct "I." At another point we are told that "Freud refers to consciousness as "*die Leuchte*," which can only be translated as 'the shining light.'" Erikson aptly describes such an expression as "religious" in character, and then offers this tellingly ironic quotation from Freud: "As may be said of our life, it is not worth much, but it is all we have. Without the illumination thrown by the quality of

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consciousness we should be lost in the obscurity of depth psychology."

Erikson tried to redeem such plain, strong language. He spoke of hope and will, of purpose and competence; he even dared use words such as love and wisdom, so commonly cheapened in our daily life. Still, there is for many of us an inclination toward the authority of murkiness—a reassurance, perhaps, which even the low-grade mystery of impenetrable prose seems able to offer men and women who claim to shun illusions, rites, prayers. Especially helpful, therefore, are social science studies that insist upon modesty, even self-criticism, as necessary correctives to the yearning many of today's readers have for definitive answers clothed in the barbarisms and neologisms of scientism. Even as Erikson tried to evoke the inner lives of our young people in a fresh, arresting manner, two recent studies follow suit: one written by Steven Tipton, which deals with the personal changes in a number of California's former political activists, and one (its senior author is the political scientist Stanley Rothman) which tries to take a careful, close look at the psychology of those activists.

FOR A LONG TIME Rothman has been trying to understand the American radicals of the so-called "New Left," youths of the late 1960s and 1970s who protested long and loud against this country's domestic and foreign policies. With his younger colleague, S. Robert Lichter, he has been sending signals, in various academic journals, that all was not well, emotionally, with many of those radicals, once regarded favorably not only by many of their fellow citizens, but by a number of us psychologists and sociologists, who did our studies virtually on the spot: amid the turmoil of the civil rights movement and the struggle prompted by this country's war in Vietnam. Professors Rothman and Lichter studied dozens of students all over the country, using the Rorschach and TAT (Thematic Apperception Test), as well as clinical interviews. This is an empirical psychology that is psychoanalytically informed, and used by astute political scientists who possess a keen sense of history, and who know how to develop their ideas in a restrained and clear-headed fashion:

> Social psychological data are an insufficient source of historical explanation. . . . We cannot prove that our personality tests captured the character and movement of psychodynamic processes. There are no eyewitness accounts of such internal dispositions. What insights we gleaned came from psychological tests that provide only brief and perhaps distorted glimpses of the psyche.

Still, they conclude that there was a darker side to the student movement of yesteryear—considerable manipulativeness, an authoritarian zeal, a desire on the part of certain Jewish radicals to exact vengeance on a society they regarded as alien and hostile, and a desire on the part of certain Christian radicals to replace one kind of self-righteousness (the kind they learned, often enough, in moderately conservative, mainstream homes) with another kind—of which they would now be principal advocates, lecturing to others ceaselessly and with no trace of uncertainty. As the authors indicate, their impressions differ from those of many other social scientists, who painted a generation of radicals as by and large, "good"—that is, in possession of that elusive but prized virtue of our time: mental health. Rothman and Lichter found plenty of arrogance and self-importance, even meanness, in their informants, who turn out to be neither saints nor devils, but sinners, surely.

At one point, the authors speculate:

> it may be that traits like narcissism and a heightened power drive are necessary to sustain a commitment to radical social change. This would militate against the facile conjunction of 'progressive politics' with psychological health.

True, but the authors are the first to recognize the real difficulty with their own kind of research:

> A danger inherent in the psychological study of politics (especially when dealing with adolescents) is the tendency to give the impression that only those people under investigation are driven by unconscious or irrational motives.

The problems of generalization are indeed serious when the psychology used as a normative yardstick (Freudian theory) explicitly emphasizes the universality of conflict, and postulates for everyone the existence of a complex topsy-turvy world—now you see it, now you don't—in which nothing is "really" what it appears to be. After all, were Rothman and Lichter to study conservative businessmen or lawyers, or yes, psychoanalysts or college professors or writers, including book reviewers, they might find the very traits they mention in ample supply: lots of that quality mentioned these days, "narcissism," and lots of "power drive," too.

In a way, Tipton's study lends an indirect but convincing authority to Rothman and Lichter's research. For Tipton the subject of inquiry was not so much radical youth as the vicissitudes and consequences of postradical disenchantment. A Californian by birth (he teaches sociology and moral philosophy at Emory), a gifted social observer, and a thoroughly literate writer, he spent long hours with three groups of men and women now living in the San Francisco area—one-time radicals who abandoned politics, became aimless, drug-prone, and mixed up, only to find three distinct new sets of allegiances: the Living Word Fellowship, Zen Buddhism, and EST (Erhard Seminar Training). We learn that the choice to enter one of those three new pathways is not quite random; Tipton correlates social situation and educational experience with each of the groups. The Living Word Fellowship has been attractive to men and women of poor and working-class background; the practice of Zen to those of the quite well-to-do intelligentsia; EST to those "almost entirely white by race, middle class by education, job and income, and urbanized by outlook and residence."

TIPTON is interested less in such sociological observation than in the struggles of his young informants to find "moral meaning" in this life. He reminds us of our divided moral heritage—part Biblical, part utilitarian—and works such a philosophical analysis into a concrete rendering of particular lives. In Tipton's analysis there is a "sixties self" to be accounted for, and its partial fate—that of a segment of American youth—is the subject of his intriguing, suggestive study: the once radical self now become the property of Jesus; the self become, as much as possible, through Zen, a non-self; the self declared to be everything there is, a lonely reality in a distracting and harsh, if not senseless, world. He provides much evidence, through his sensitive moral and social scrutiny, to confirm the suggestion of Rothman and Lichter that young American activists were struggling with demonic pressures from within, as well as with mean-spirited sheriffs in distant obscure towns, not to mention the decisions of high-and-mighty Washington officeholders.

None of these social scientists would

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make any urgent, unqualified categorizations or generalizations. In an important way, they all hedge their bets and evoke a chronicle of manners rather than an agenda of overwrought formulations. Their enviable predecessors and still wonderfully discerning present-day colleagues are, of course, the novelists—as in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, wherein youthful protest is searched (quite skeptically) for its meaning, wherein the fate of such activity is connected to various social and historical circumstances, and yes, wherein the word "identity" (in Book Eight) is even used in precisely the way Erikson has used it.

ROBERT COLES

THE SPIRITS OF ALBANY

Ironweed
by William Kennedy

(Viking, 227 pp., $14.95)

The third of William Kennedy's "Albany novels," *Ironweed*, is also the best, and it should bring this original and invigorating novelist to the attention of many new readers, especially since it is written in a language that is vital throughout. The previous two novels, *Legs* and *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (both just reissued by Penguin, $5.95 each) had excellent parts, scenes in which Mr. Kennedy's skill in the vivid rendering of speech and action works perfectly. One remembers, for example, the moment in *Legs* when Jack Diamond, the legendary gangster, gives a demonstration—to the book's nervous lawyer-narrator, Marcus Gorman—of how to shoot a gun, one midsummer Sunday afternoon at Jimmy Biondo's place in the Catskills. Or there was the day Billy Phelan bowled a near-perfect game (a score of 299) at the Downtown Health Amusement Club ("no women, no mixed leagues, please, beer on tap till 4:00 AM"), causing his opponent, Scotty Streck (from the West End German neighborhood of Cabbagetown) to fall dead of a heart attack ("it was reliably reported during his [Scotty's] lifetime that he would not give a sick whore a hairpin"). But the books as a whole are less good than their individual parts: *Legs* is too long, repetitive, episodic; *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* feels a shade wandering, not quite focused on a significant action.

But *Ironweed* is so focused, from its strong beginning in Saint Agnes's Cemetery, where Francis Phelan—shoveling dirt on various caskets in order to earn, for a change, a day's wages—confronts in the most natural and inevitable-seeming way, the spirits of the dead. It is the eve of All Saints Day in 1938, and in a line of encounters stretching through the book, Francis begins by meeting his parents, then his son Gerald, whom as thirteen-day-old infant he let slip through his hands while changing a diaper. Gerald died instantly of a cracked neckbone, after which Francis left home and for the last twelve years has been running. He and his friend Rudy ("A little chilly," [Francis] said, "but it's gonna be a nice day." "If it don't puke," said Rudy),

> . . . and both knew intimately the etiquette, the taboos, the protocol of bums. By their talk to each other they understood that they shared a belief in the brotherhood of the desolate; yet in the scars of their eyes they confirmed that no such fraternity had ever existed, that the only brotherhood they belong to was the one that asked that enduring question: How do I get through the next twenty minutes?

As one of the novel's epigraphs informs us, tall ironweed is a member of the sunflower family with an especially tough stem. We are invited to think of Francis, the book's hero, in similar terms; for he is a fighter, can sleep the last night of October—"the unruly night when grace is always in short supply and the new dead walk abroad in this land"—in a patch of weeds, arising none the worse for it to walk another day about the streets of Albany. The spirit of place is admirably present in Kennedy's writing, and for someone like myself whose knowledge of Albany is limited to dimming memories of making bus and train connections there thirty years ago, or driving through it and occasionally stopping for spaghetti, his presentation is authoritative. Sometimes it consists of little more than a list:

> The bus rolled south on Broadway following the old trolley tracks, down through Menands and into North Albany, past Simmons Machine, the Albany Felt Mill, the Bond Bakery, the Eastern Tablet Company, the Albany Paper Works.

Or it may be the Pruyn Library, or Palombo's Hotel, or the Primrose Tea Room on State Street (which I regret never having visited). At other moments

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a deeper, more lyric sense of place is created, as in these sentences early in the novel when Francis pauses from his shoveling to take a look around him:

> . . . down the hill toward Broadway and over toward the hills of Rensselaer and Troy on the other side of the Hudson, the coke plant spewing palpable smoke from its great chimney at the far end of the Menands bridge. Francis decided this would be a fine place to be buried. The hill had a nice flow to it that carried you down the grass and out onto the river, and then across the water and up through the trees on the far shore to the top of the hills, all in one swoop. Being dead here would situate a man in place and time.

Against such yearnings to be "situated" in a more permanent position, as it were, is Francis's ironweed-like persistence. At one moment later in the novel, he turns on the "spooks" (or are they saints?) who have haunted him and tells them that "You ain't real and I ain't gonna be at your beck and call no more": "You're all dead, and if you ain't, you oughta be. I'm the one is livin'. I'm the one that puts you on the map." We may be reminded of Joyce's Bloom in the cemetery with his sudden recognition that he is not dead, not yet: "Let them sleep in their maggoty beds. They are not going to get me this innings. Warm beds: warm fullblooded life."

BUT the fullblooded life in *Ironweed* is most copiously found in the language with which Kennedy has endowed these "marginal" people so as to make them anything but marginal. Particularly Francis Phelan, who is not only a sometime baseball player but the bum-as-poet, as when he walks past Hawkins Stadium:

> He remembered when it was a pasture. Hit a ball right and it'd roll forever, right into the weeds. Bow-Wow Buckley'd be after it and he'd find it right away, a wizard. Bow-Wow kept half a dozen spare balls in the weeds for emergencies like that. Then he'd throw the runner out at third on a sure home run and he'd brag about his fielding. Honesty. Bow-Wow is dead. Worked on an ice wagon and punched his own horse and it stomped him, was that it? Nah. That's nuts. Who'd punch a horse?

Or he relates a list of bums who slept in the weeds in cold weather, to rise no more:

> There was another guy, Pocono Pete, he died in Denver, like a brick. And Poocher Felton, he bought it in Detroit, pissed his pants and froze tight to the sidewalk. And a crazy bird they called Ward Six, no other name. They found him with a red icicle growin' out of his nose. . . . Foxy Phil Tooker, a skinny little runt, he froze all scrunched up, knees under his chin.

Or he decides, with the proceeds of a day hauling rags for a ragman, to purchase a turkey and visit with his wife and children for the first time in twelve years. Asking where he can get such a bird, he manages to frighten a lady, and her husband launches into action:

> "What did you ask my wife?" he said.
> "I asked if she knew where I could get a turkey."
> "What for?"
> "Well," said Francis, and he paused, and scuffed one foot, "my duck died."
> "Just keep movin', bud."
> "Gotcha," Francis said, and he limped on.

Kennedy's comic poetry of dialogue bears comparison with another contemporary expert at this game—George V. Higgins.

Like Updike's Rabbit Angstrom, Francis runs, and his creator expresses this condition in an elevated level of diction that is another aspect of the book's style:

> the running from the calumny of men and women, the running from family, from bondage, from destitution of spirit through ritualistic straightenings, the running, finally, in a quest for pure flight as a fulfilling mannerism of the spirit.

This sort of high talk could be dangerous to the book's poise, which is essentially a comic one—though with scenes of fine pathos as, most notably, in Francis's return home, turkey under his arm. On occasion I felt the writing about the hero, and about Helen—the woman for whom Francis cares and whose own tale is important here—was grandiose, perhaps too ambitious. But Kennedy is an exuberant writer who likes to try out different styles, and he succeeds so well so much of the time that I was quite won over. It is extremely satisfying to come upon a new novelist, so resourcefully assured in his command of language and place. I plan to stop in Albany next time, avoid all recent creations of Mr. Rockefeller's city, and do instead some reconstructing, with the aid of William Kennedy's novels, of what once was there.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

William H. Pritchard teaches English at Amherst and is the author of *Lives of the Modern Poets* (Oxford University Press).

TRB, *from page 6*

deficit in excess of $200 billion this year after promising a balanced budget the year before, a severely overvalued dollar, a real rate of interest around 7 percent, about 12 million unemployed, and a world trade that is dangerously sagging? Why, to be sure, he goes on television, acknowledges "a painful period," in his State of the Union address, says we should meet it with "courage, patience, and strength," expresses compassion, blames things on outsiders, and adds that "America is on the mend." The speech is beautifully delivered, full of professional grace. I know I am unfair, but I keep thinking of the White Mountains Regional High School in January 1976.

From now on, through the interstices of the daily news, you will be reading about the two-year Presidential race. Democrats have tried to shorten the political operation. Instead of a five-week interval between the initial Iowa caucus and the first state primary (in New Hampshire) the gap will be only eight days. A week after New Hampshire there will be primaries in fifteen other states. How will it work? Nobody knows. In Sacramento the other day seven Democratic hopefuls assembled in a kind of media free-for-all. Press and TV, with their interviews, reports, and opinion polls, are, of course, part of the selection process. Walter Mondale has already been tagged the "front-runner," followed by John Glenn. Can they qualify under the Lord Bryce ambivalent definition of mediocrity? Glenn looks like a reasonably safe man so far, but Mondale had better watch out: he has a tendency toward eloquence and leadership. He caught the crowd at Sacramento with the rhetorical device of repetition, hammering out what he would do as President: "Right now, today, if I were President I would chop those deficits down by scaling the defense budget to reality! I would slam the lid on hospital costs and inflation. I'd repeal or delay the indexation of taxes, and I'd reduce scheduled tax cuts for the wealthy!" He used that "Right now, today" device fourteen times, by my count, ending with a cry that as President he'd grab the White House "hotline" to Moscow, "and I'd say this: 'Dear Mr. Andropov, please meet me in Geneva this afternoon and let's sit down and do some work to bring some easing of tensions!' " The crowd cheered. But whether Bryce would approve I don't know.

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 5*

obliges our allies to oscillate between American demands for a greater conventional effort that leaves them skeptical, and their own demands for tokens of American nuclear reliability, which can never be fully convincing.

Secondly, the central issue is not really deterrence versus war fighting (or winning). Colin Gray is too easy a target. It is: what is it that deters? Some believe that it is the risk of an uncontrollable escalation to mutual nuclear destruction that deters, whatever the details of the balance; others believe that only what the experts call "escalation matching"—a substantial equivalence in weapons—deters. And the fact, alas, is that we have been driven in the second direction relentlessly, not by evil or stupid men, not by a "dilution of concepts," but by two deadly logics. One is that of technology, which has produced ever more accurate weapons, i.e., weapons usable against military forces; the other is that of America's alliances and interests abroad. The danger of war does not lie in a Soviet nuclear attack on the United States out of the blue, but in a crisis in Europe, or the Middle East, or Asia, and most likely in a conventional war that could not be won by us, but would force us into the dilemma: defeat or escalation to the nuclear level. In other words, it is not James Schlesinger who has "converted" American strategy to counterforce, it is the geopolitical situation of the United States that has—ever since American cities themselves became vulnerable to Soviet retaliation—made it necessary for the United States to be able to threaten a first strike, not against Soviet cities but against Soviet forces, in order to protect vital American interests around the world. Once one realizes that we are trying to deter not merely attacks on the United States but attacks—nuclear or nonnuclear—on essential stakes, the line between "pure" deterrence and war fighting vanishes: (some) war fighting capability is crucial for (extended) deterrence. We could give up extended deterrence only if we had adequate conventional forces all around the periphery of the Soviet Union; and even then, we could never be sure that conventional balance is enough of a deterrent.

None of this means that there hasn't been a delirious inflation of nuclear war-fighting means, on both sides. Much of it has indeed undermined, if not necessarily deterrence (which is still holding), at least crisis stability (i.e., assurance against a pre-emptive strike); and only drastic measures of arms control (negotiated or unilateral) can reverse this course and reduce the risks. But the relatively happy illusion of mutual assured destruction was never reflected in America's targeting plans, which always, necessarily, aimed first at military targets. The real distinction is not between deterrence and war fighting, but between the attempt to deter by countersilo and "decapitation" strategies, and the attempt to deter by the possession of some counterforce capabilities that create a plausible risk of escalation to mutual destruction—between strategies that create incentives to preempt, and those that do not, and therefore do not undermine deterrence, and make arms control less difficult.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Enemies

I AM USUALLY OPPOSED to seeing intramural debates appear in the pages of this magazine. But occasionally something slips in unseen by an editor, something from which he feels obliged to dissociate himself. Two weeks ago an item in our Notebook section, after insisting on TNR's disdain for Stalinists, added in a spirit of evenhandedness that this doesn't make us neoconservatives and that, in fact, we have little use for them, either. To prove that we were serious on this point, it concluded that "the enemy of my enemy may still be my enemy." Well, neoconservatives are not my enemies. Nor do I consider them enemies of TNR. Not only have many—Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, James Q. Wilson, Penn Kemble, Hilton Kramer—contributed to our pages, but on many issues, particularly in foreign affairs, we agree. Anyway, I take no particular pride in having enemies. I have always been dismayed by people who only half-mockingly express disappointment at not having made Nixon's enemies list: to regret having missed the chance to borrow prestige from a man one despises is to show at best a confusion of values. TNR has enough enemies without adding sometime adversaries among neoconservatives to the list.

FOR THOSE LIKE ME who have a cyclical view of history (a view I am most devoted to on alternate Tuesdays), the recurrence of old dichotomies and old fights is a kind of reassurance. Plato and Aristotle, Jefferson and Hamilton, Hegel and Marx will always be with us. And now Danton and Robespierre are back for a return engagement. They take up their quarrel, after a two-hundred-year intermission, thanks to Andrzej Wajda's new film *Danton*, financed in part by the French and Polish governments. The film has yet to reach the United States, but the Polish government has already made it plain that it is unlikely ever to reach Poland. *The New York Times* reports drily that "the Poles say they are having problems dubbing it." The French Socialists, it seems, are having an equally tough time swallowing it. The film has been the occasion for Paris's monthly scandal. Danton opposes the Terror, Robespierre defends it, and both of course are consumed by it. Wajda comes out for Danton. This has discomfited Wajda's French Socialist backers, not because they believe in terror (indeed, it is Mitterrand who finally retired the guillotine), but because in the film the Revolution comes out about as badly as Robespierre, and French Socialists consider themselves the rightful heirs and keepers of the Revolution. The nondemocratic left has had other problems with the film, as the *Times* reports: "Robespierre's defenders, who include some prominent Communist historians, have argued that . . . many of the historical portraits of Robespierre are parodies, created by his enemies after his fall. Robespierre, they maintain, was a man of much more complex nature and more subtle political views. In fact, at the same time he was killing Danton's followers on the right, he was also executing oppositionists on the left." So say Robespierre's defenders. The prosecution rests.

I HAVE A PIECE of the Revolution on my office wall. It is the French Revolutionary calendar, a useless device for telling me where I am supposed to be on Saturday night, but a constant, and, to me, tender reminder of the follies men commit in the name of reason. The makers of the Revolution, who were already remaking the state, society, and man, thought it only natural to reform time, too. So 1792 became the Year One. Oh, to live among men ready to declare that the past ended, that history—nay, time—began, say, last Thursday. Of course, one wouldn't really say "Thursday" anymore, because the Revolution abolished the week. Seven was a number steeped in superstition, in gloomy obscurantist clericalism. So a new week was created with ten days (a "decade"), each new month with three new weeks, and each year with twelve perfect months of thirty days each. The sun, despite its respect for Newton's laws, insisted on circling Republican France not every 360 days (that beautiful number divisible by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10—everything except the mysterious 7), but every 365 and some. Charles Gilbert Romme, president of the Committee of Public Instruction and the man charged by the National Convention to create the new time, was not daunted. He created 5 new days, the glorious *Sansculottides*, national holidays each with its own name—*de la Vertu, du Gênie, du Travail, de l'Opinion*, and *des Récompenses*—to celebrate reason and revolution. The wonderful thing is that these 5 days exist on their own, floating outside any week or month. If the year ended on, say, a Sunday (or *Primedi*, as it was renamed with deadly decimality), one would go off into the 5 days of revelry and return to work on the sixth—a Monday (*Duodi*).

IN HIS MAGNIFICENT STORY, "The Library of Babel," Jorge Luis Borges captures most poignantly the pathos of this crazy human passion to bend the universe to reason. In this parable the entire universe is an enormous library, an endless series of hexagonal galleries floating in space. It is filled with books consisting of what appear to be endless permutations and combinations of the letters of the alphabet. Those who have not simply despaired of this sea of nonsense spend their lives searching the Library for a page, a line, a phrase of meaning amidst the mad cascades of random lettering. The author tells of the crusades launched to combat the terror of living in this world of crushing inscrutability, and to find the rumored catalog of catalogs by which the Library explains itself. One sect believed that by destroying those books that were clearly incomprehensible, it could reduce the amount of chaos in the world, and thus hasten the hour of revelation. Of course, their task was hopeless; the Library is infinite. Though these revolutionaries killed many a librarian defending the sacred books under his care, the author—himself the custodian of an obscure set of hexagons whose most precious volume is entitled "The Combed Thunderclap"—recounts with utmost sympathy the tragic history of these desperate fanatics. Such a man would have recognized Robespierre as his enemy, and been seized not with pride but with melancholy.

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND left the screening of *Danton* without saying a word. But on the subject of Jorge Luis Borges he was quite eloquent. Last month he made sure to be present when Borges was awarded the Légion d'honneur. I revere Borges, but I had never been able to make up my mind about Mitterrand. No longer. The friend of my friend is my friend.

C.K.

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Turning backward would not expunge any of today's problems. With technological development curtailed, the problems would fester even as the means for solving them were blunted. To curb technology would be to squelch innovation, stifle imagination, and cap the human spirit.

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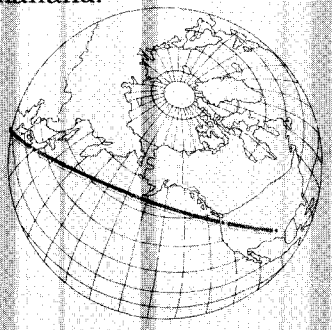

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